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# LETTERS

WRITTEN

DURING A JOURNEY

TO

*MONTPELLIER.*

PERFORMED IN THE AUTUMN OF 1804.

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BY

CHRISTIAN AUGUSTUS FISCHER,

*Author of Travels in Spain, Spanish Miscellanies,*

*&c. &c.*

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE talents of Mr. FISCHER are advantageously known to the British public, by the translation of his “Travels in Spain, performed in the Year 1798.” That work afforded ample proofs not only of his intelligence to distinguish what was worth describing, but also of his ability to describe with force and elegance. His letters upon the Spanish character, contained in the volumes alluded to, abound with pleasing information, and shew that he is by no means a superficial observer of human nature. At the present important crisis, the public cannot but feel interested in perusing a series of observations on the internal state of France, from the pen of an unprejudiced tourist; and the following letters, besides an abundance of information for the lovers of botany and natural history, will be found to contain many striking remarks on the character, manners, and domestic economy, of the French people.





# A JOURNEY

TO

## MONTPELLIER, &c.

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### LETTER I.

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INTRODUCTION.—DEPARTURE FROM MARSEILLES.—RETROSPECT.—CHANGES.—ALBERTRAS.—LE PIN.—AIX.—CLIMATE.—DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENT.—CIRCUMSCRIBED SOCIAL RELATIONS.—REMARKS.

*Aix, February 1804.*

YOU see, my dear friend, that I have at length left Marseilles, in order to take the shortest way to Nismes. I say the shortest, because after an abode here of a few days, I set out directly through Arles and thereby save a considerable round; which I must otherwise have taken with the diligence through Avignon.

I arrived here yesterday, with tolerable expedition and convenience, by one of the common Marseilles coaches. As I am now lodged at the agreeable hotel *les quatre Nations*, I will see whether I can communicate to you any thing either important or unimportant concerning this monosyllabic town.

Having ascended the hill well known by the name of *la Visto*,\* we have again a command of the whole beautiful and entire gulph, as far as the island; and at the same time sensibly feel that we are receding from the coast, and taking a northern direction. By degrees the mountains retire from our sight, the whole scene becomes confused, and a dry raw land-breeze announces our distance from the ocean.

This was the more perceptible, as the north wind blew directly against us; and notwithstanding the friendly rays of the

\* Not *vista*; for in all provincial dialects the feminine ends in *o*.

sun, rushed cold and cutting over the plain. Thus we passed Albertras, among the green avenues of which already waved the breath of spring; and Le Pin, where the landscape becomes fully open.

We now perceived Aix, situated amidst plantations of vines and olives; and driving down a rather deep declivity into the plain below, entered the suburbs (surrounded by beggars), and proceeded to what is called the inn.

Though the climate is by no means agreeable, I shall speak of it first.—Cold and heat, wet and dry, succeed each other with incredible rapidity: the summers are oppressively hot, from the sun's rays being reflected by the chalk hills with which the town is surrounded. The winters are, on the contrary, rather severe; as the town lies completely open to the north-west wind. In the winter it usually freezes for two months, and in the summer hardly a week passes without a thunder-storm.

With regard to domestic arrangements, Aix is far from being a cheap place. In a good inn (the above-mentioned for example), without having the best wine, or any thing unusual, it costs from nine to ten livres a day. Other necessities, was ashing, clothes, &c. are also rather dear; lodging alone may be regarded as an exception, which may arise from the population being two-fifths less than formerly. A well-furnished room can be had for six-and-thirty, and a whole floor for a hundred and fifty, livres a year.

There is hardly a trace of social connection existing in Aix at present. Since the abolition of the parliament, since the emigration of the rich and hospitable nobility, since the impoverishing of the rest of the inhabitants; in short, since the all-destroying revolution; the splendid circles which once filled this proud and opulent city, are to be seen no more. The stranger finds himself on a miserable spot, where is nothing but a small reading-room, a library very little larger, and a few bad coffee-houses. The once beautiful course is, like every thing else, destroyed; and a pleasant walk can only be taken in the surrounding country. For the naturalist here are however some curiosities, which I shall mention in my next letter.



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 LETTER II.
 

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MINERAL SPRINGS, WITH THEIR PECULIARITIES.—CURIOSITIES.—ICHTHYOPETRES.—BOTANICAL EXCURSIONS.—AGRICULTURAL REMARKS.—OIL TRADE.—MANUFACTURES.

Aix, February 1804.

**B**EFORE all things I must speak of the warm springs, to which Aix is indebted for its existence; a colony having been established here by Sextius Calvinus on their account, who had them called after him *Aquæ Sextiæ*. Their temperature is twenty-seven or twenty-eight degrees of Reaumur: their component parts appear to be magnesia, selenite, and mineral alkali; and their effects are not only highly spoken of in all cutaneous diseases, but also in the most obstinate venereal and rheumatic ones. The month of May is thought the best bathing-time. These springs retained their pre-eminence till the year 1770: since which they have fallen more and more into disrepute, and for the last twenty years have been almost entirely without visitors; a consequence of which is the entire neglect of the former bathing arrangements, and instead there is now only an insignificant undertaking of a private nature.

These springs are said to be warmest in the winter, and coolest in the summer; but since this opinion rests only upon the assertion of those who bathe, it may be accounted for by the different degrees of heat in the human body in the two seasons. It is just so with the waters upon the coast; where warm water is drawn from one cask, and cold from another: which arises from a warm mineral and a common cold spring being united in one pump. The water used in general is extremely bad, being all impregnated with particles of lime and chalk.

This reminds me of the lime-pits upon the Monte d'Avignon, as it is called, three quarters of a league from Aix, so famous for their representations of fish. The stones in which these ichthyopetres are found, are Werner's *bituminous marl, slate*. The impressions themselves are flat and sharp; the heads and backs appear blackish, and the intermediate space is deep yellow; they ferment but slowly in nitric acid, though they finally dissolve in it. Upon the application of a hot iron they appear at first black, send forth a smell resembling burnt horn, and afterwards become wholly white. The extreme parts of the horizontal viens,



which are clearly to be seen, vitrify slowly to a white blistry flake. The fish chiefly represented are barbs, flat-fish, &c.

If the mineralogist find these and various sorts of beautiful marbles not interesting, the botanist will find here still more scope for observation. The climate is, I may say, fitted for universal vegetation. The northern declivities of the hills produce alpine; the southern, tropical plants. A small space often divides the *Gentiana* from the *Æller sembranthemum*; to these may be added almost all the provincial plants, which the botanist can here study with Gerard and Geridel in his hand.

For this purpose the hills of Montaignes, Prignon, Barret, Tolonet, Beaurecueil, and likewise the plain of Milles, the shores of the Arc, but above all the Montagne Sainte Victoire situated on the eastern side of the town, are to be recommended.

If we view the surrounding country in reference to agriculture, we find an extremely light and chalky land mixed with clay and particles of iron, which with proper culture is well adapted for the growth of vines and olive-trees. The land of Aix itself is on the contrary hard, stony, and limy, admits of but little improvement, and is evident (as from the imperfect state of agriculture) receives but little.

Wine and oil are here mentioned as the chief articles of trade. The former, when the produce of a good vineyard, may (if well managed and kept for a certain time) be sold for old Bourdeaux; the latter is exported to Italy in large quantities. The oil, on account of its purity, mildness, and fine flavour, is famous all over Europe\*, and was formerly exported to many distant countries. But since the hard winters of 1789 and the following years, so many olive-trees have been frozen, and during the revolution so few planted, that Aix has now almost intirely lost this its first and most lucrative branch of commerce.

The former flourishing manufactories have shared the same melancholy fate. The most opulent have either failed, or are removed to Marseilles. The cotton-manufactories are almost the only ones which Aix yet retains, and this only on account of the water. It is said that great cattle-markets were formerly held here, but these are also declining rapidly. All things consi-

\* It may be kept more than three years without spoiling, and has a delightful smell. During the first four or five months indeed it is rather bitter and piquant, but becomes afterwards particularly sweet and pleasant. It is an error to suppose that the thick oil from Grasse, Nissa, &c. is better, because it is at first sweet: and equally so to give the preference to the clarified oils, as they are called; which though they receive a clear and transparent appearance, are robbed of their most essential qualities in the preparation.

dered, it is easy to explain why nothing is visible here but poverty and misery.

In order in some degree to recompense this town for its present desolate state and want of trade, the government has found it expedient not only to abolish the criminal courts of appeal in all the departments, but also to sanction the revival of the famous theatrical processions formerly in use on Corpus-Christi day. It is well known that this pious farce (if it may be so called) drew together no less than seven thousand spectators; that its celebration very judiciously happened at the same time with that of the annual fair; and that it brought a number of advantages to the town, which were regarded as a sort of provincial revenue: and it is more than likely, that when Buonaparte allowed the restoration of this grotesque cavalcade, it was only from these reasons. It must be pretty evident that a man of his talent and political power, could not have permitted the introduction of similar customs so falsely viewed at a distance, and on that very account so severely censured, without having some important end in view.

The last procession of this kind took place in the year 1788 or 1789; and the first since the revolution in the last year, 1803. Notwithstanding the intermediate space of fifteen years, the actors had by no means forgotten their parts; and the whole farce was performed, with all its minutia, in the greatest perfection\*. The twelve superior and the four inferior demons, the king, and the angels, fought stoutly for the victory. Moses and the high priests; the golden Calf and the queen of Sheba, the three Wise Men of the East, Herod with the babes of Bethlehem, John in his camel's hair, and Jesus in a Capuchin's cowl, appeared with all the other personages, and all their attributes, just in the same form and order as before. The old Centaur too danced the bell-dance of the lepers, all performed in the most perfect costume of the ancients. Should any one feel himself displeased, let him reflect that this has never been regarded in any other light than that of a religious masquerade.

I have given you as much information concerning Aix as two letters would contain. Whether the ladies here are as free in the distribution of their favours as they are said to be, I am not able to decide; having in reality neither time, opportunity, courage, nor gallantry, for the attainment of this knowledge.—Adieu, my dear friend! To-morrow I pursue my journey to Arles.

\* Vide Explication des Ceremonies de la Fête-Dieu d'Aix, &c. par Gregoire. Aix, chez David, 1777, with plates and notes.



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 LETTER III.
 

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JOURNEY TO AELES.—ST. CANAT.—PELISSANE.—THE CRAN.  
 —DIVISIONS.—CULTIVATED PART.—DESERT PART.—  
 PRODUCTIONS OF THE FORMER.—QUALITIES OF THE  
 LATTER.—MEADOWS.—REMARKS UPON THEM.—FORMER  
 ALTERATIONS.—SHEPHERD'S LIFE.—PROSPECT OF AND  
 ARRIVAL IN ARLES.

*Arles, Feb. 1804.*

**I** ARRIVED here in the company of an intelligent and worthy commissioner of the marine, who has to forward the sale of a convoy of corn for the Toulon fleet. We were obliged to take a carriage to ourselves; because the diligence belonging to Messrs. Dervieux takes a great circuit and in that which goes direct from Barrachin there was no room. It has cost me indeed three times as much, but I have thus had a greater opportunity of making observations.

From Aix to St. Canat we passed between barren chalk-hills, and only here and there perceived a solitary almond-tree in blossom, or fig-tree covered with ripe fruit, growing on the edge of a frozen stream; but near St. Canat, where the Lyons high road turns off on the left towards Pelissane, the landscape visibly begins to beautify. The chalk-hills are covered with pines (*Pinus maritima*), and evergreen oaks (*Quercus ilex*); meadows and corn fields beautifully alternate with vineyards and olive-plantations, through which little rivulets are continually flowing. Every object announces a fruitful and well-cultivated soil. Having passed the back of the dirty but cheerful town Salon, we immediately entered the Cran.

This is a large triangular plain, full thirty square leagues in circumference. Its extreme point extends towards the sea, and its surface lies east and west. Its outer parts, or borders, are pretty well cultivated for an extent of twelve leagues; but the centre, which comprehends at least eight leagues, is an entire waste of gravel land. On the north and east sides the Cran is surrounded by elevations, and slopes on the south and west towards the ocean and the Rhone.

Its cultivated parts are the environs of Istres, Figuières, Arles, Salon, &c. which are fertilized by canals conveyed thither from the Durance, and called (after their constructor) Canal de Craponne,

Here are numerous fine meadows, and fields fenced in with olive and mulberry trees; at the same time the cultivation of vegetables and vines is not neglected.

Very different are the other parts of the Cran, which are soon attained by proceeding from the cultivated parts into the interior. Nothing here presents itself to the eye but an immeasurable expanse of stones piled upon stones. On examining it more closely, it appears first that these pebbles, from three to four, and here and there from even fifty feet deep, rest upon a boggy mass; and secondly, that this mass itself is composed of clay, sand, and gravel, bound together by a sort of glutinous chalk.

The pebbles themselves are very various; from the largest to the smallest, some are close and shining, and others brittle and irregular; in one spot partaking of the nature of the northern mountains, and in another quite different. The sort of stone the most prevalent is a hard, scaly, brittle quartz, internally grey, with a surface sometimes red and sometimes yellow, and in a variety of shades; this description embraces at least seven-eighths of the whole. There are some among them also of a flaky substance, internally of a red and yellow colour. The result of the closest examination is the very rational conjecture, that the Cran has been formerly a large basin standing in connection with the sea.

Although this desert appears to be nothing but a barren and stony plain, yet it affords excellent pasturage for sheep: as there grow among the stones a number of the finest aromatic plants, which constitute a very proper food; and to which, not without reason, the fine flavour of the mutton is attributed. Hence that part of the Cran is divided off into large and small meadowlands, the boundaries being marked by piles of stones.

Formerly the sheep were brought to graze here only in the winter months, from November to April; and in the summer, from May to October, they were carried to the mountains of Dauphiny and Upper Province. But for the last fifteen years these journeys have ceased, and the sheep remain the whole year upon the Cran. This has at the same time been attended with a great degeneracy in the quality, and diminution in the number, of the sheep; they having been formerly computed at four hundred thousand, while at present they hardly reach half that amount. These *consous*, with the shepherds and their dogs, baggage, asses, and huts, their provisions, &c. afford no uninteresting view. We passed pretty close to several of them.

Having thus gone over a part of the Cran, and refreshed ourselves with the smell of some of its aromatic herbs, we at length arrived at the little village St. Martin del Cran; which may be compared to an island surrounded with fertile fields and trees, in the midst of an immense ocean of stones. But these swiftly dis-



appear, and are succeeded again by the desolate morass through which the gloomy sterile old town of Arles winds along the banks of the Rhone.

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## LETTER IV.

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PROSPECTS FROM ARLES.—CLIMATE.—SICK.—MEASURES OF GOVERNMENT.—PRODUCTIONS OF THE CANTON.—CAMARGNE.—ITS DESCRIPTION.—SALT-PITS.—PASTURE LAND.—REMARKS.—NAVIGATION OF THE RHONE.—OBSERVATIONS.

*Arles, Feb. 1804.*

**H**AVING closely examined the country of Arles, its marshes, bogs, and the channels which in spring and autumn overflow the fields and meadows, from the sloping of the land, and the depression of the coast to which the streams hasten, the traveller might almost be led to believe that he was suddenly transported to Zealand. Every thing proves its proximity with the sea, and its being the most unhealthy town in the south of France.

The climate itself is indeed extremely mild; the thermometer not sinking below  $3^{\circ}$ , nor rising above  $22^{\circ}$ , Reaumur. But the continual damps of the air, the incessant vapours from the morass, the foulness of the water, and the low situation of the town, (which is scarcely raised seven feet above the surface of the ocean) render Arles one of the most unhealthy places of abode.

The ague rages here the year through; except in the hot months, when it becomes a malignant fever. You must therefore not be surprized, my dear friend, when you hear that the men attain a middle age at twenty-seven, the women at thirty, and that persons who reach sixty are perfect rarities.

But are no means used to ameliorate the situation of Arles? to dry up the stagnant mire?—Yes. To do justice to the government, they have been diligently occupied with it for the last ten years. What was so happily commenced in the seventeenth century by the Dutch family of the Warrens, but the prosecution of which was neglected after their expulsion through the abolition of the edict of Nantes; what at a later period the inhabitants themselves endeavoured at, but could not prosecute for want of support, (namely, the completion of this benevolent and vast project) will be ultimately accomplished under the government of Buonaparte.

This is so much the more important, since the canton Arles, of which is said to contain fifty square leagues in circumference, has been long the storehouse which supplied Provence, Lan-

guedoc, and nearly all the southern departments, with its superfluous hay, oxen, horses, and salt. Formerly the income from grazing sheep, and the culture of the *Quercus corcifera*, was very considerable; but now the number of flocks on the Cran are so much diminished, and during the revolution so many of these trees have been demolished by the mad fanatics, that Arles has nearly lost the most important branch of its trade. It is, however, always supported by the exportation of the above chief productions; particularly horses and oxen, of which a great number are bred in the Carmagne.

The Carmagne is a large island on the Rhone, lying rather below the town; and divides that majestic stream into two arms. It has the form of a right-angled triangle, each side being seven leagues in length; and is skirted by the great arm of the Rhone on the north, by the small on the south, and on the east by the ocean. It is watered by many canals, both from the sea and the Rhone. The soil consists of a fine moorland mixed with gravel, containing numerous particles of salt. It is used partly for salt-pits, and partly for meadow-land.

The pond of the Vacarets, as it is called, is chiefly used for the salt-works; and is at least three leagues in circumference, and connected with the sea. The salt is here, as usual, obtained by evaporation, from passing the sea-water through the various channels; but this can only take place from June to October. The produce of these works are estimated at a hundred and twenty thousand livres.

In general there are found in the interior and lower parts of the island a number of salt-ponds, bogs, and springs, which evidently have their sources in the sea, and on whose banks grow many alkaline plants, and among others the *Salsola herbacea*, which are used for soda. This soda is said to be forty per cent. worse than the Spanish; the plant whose seed was brought here by the wreck of a vessel, having most probably degenerated.

The external parts of the island are in particular used for pasturage; since by means of the facility with which they may be watered, the finest meadows can be laid out. The country-houses there are very appropriately called *towers*, and by many of them it is easy to perceive how much the Camargne has increased in magnitude; for example, the Tower of St. Louis, which in 1630 was built not far from the shore, at present stands at a league distance.

This increase of meadow-land is attended with great advantage; as thousands of horses, sheep, and oxen, are hence found nearly in a state of wildness. At the same time the proprietor must mark those which belong to him; which ceremony gives birth to a sort of Arcadian festival, known by the name of *ferrades*.



These *ferrades* are usually set on foot by several proprietors at the same time; and are usually attended by many thousands both of invited and uninvited guests, from a distance of ten miles round. To this end a sort of circus is formed with carts, upon a large and newly-mown meadow, where the operation can be performed with safety to the operator. Each cart is adorned with flags, streamers, and ribands; and provided with a scaffold for the accommodation of the spectators.

On one side of the circus a large fire is lighted for heating the marking-iron. On the opposite side is an opening through which the cattle may be driven, which are in the mean time confined near at hand. The marking of the bulls being attended with the greatest difficulty, I shall say a few words upon it by the way.

As soon as the usual signal is given by three pistol-shots, the guards on horseback, armed with three-pronged goads, proceed to the inclosure, let out from twelve to fifteen bulls, and drive them in full gallop into the circus, and directly up to the fire; which they hardly reach before five or six guards spring on each, bring them to the ground, and hold them motionless till the principal shepherd has pressed the red-hot iron on their legs.

The instant this is done they are let loose; to run foaming, raging, and roaring, round the circus. The guards on horseback seek the open place; those on foot save themselves in the carts, which are often overthrown by the bulls; and the whole presents a truly tragi-comic scene. The bulls at length becoming weary, stand still; and quietly follow the cows to the meadow, which are brought into the circus for that end. The former scene then recommences with another number, and thus not less than a hundred are marked daily.

A great part of the above-mentioned productions, particularly hay, corn, and salt, are shipped up the Rhone; notwithstanding the navigation is so dangerous, from the continual fluctuations of the navigable water, from the many cliffs they are forced to double, from the want of a secure haven against the violence of the stream, and the yet greater violence of the winds off so low and open a coast.

It is true that the town of Marseilles, which is the most interested in protecting the vessels, keeps its own pilots (*escandail-laires*) in pay, for apprising the ships by signal of the depth of water, &c. But notwithstanding all these efforts, the number of vessels which are lost yearly is said to be very considerable. In vain has project been conceived upon project for the improvement of the navigation; in vain have the best engineers declared, with one voice, that the several branches of the Rhone must be united into one common bed with only one mouth: nothing has yet been done; and yet I am much deceived if Buonaparte do not here also, with a word, render that practicable which has been the wish of several centuries.



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 LETTER V.
 

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INHABITANTS OF ARLES.—CHARACTERISTICS.—WOMEN.  
 RURAL AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS.—NATURAL HISTORY.—PLANTS.—BIRDS.—STONE-QUARRIES.

Arles, Feb. 1804.

**I**F you ask me whether Arles contains any thing very remarkable, I must candidly answer you, "Very little."

To begin with the inhabitants. To me they appear a sort of provincial Dutch. They are phlegmatic, quiet, and good-natured, though not without a certain mixture of southern vivacity and tranquillity. They are lustier than those of the other provinces; their features are notwithstanding strong, and they have countenances such as are peculiar to all the inhabitants of the south. Would one describe them in a few words, it could not be done with more justice than in the words of my fellow-traveller, "*Ce sont des Hollandois au vin.*"

The women of Arles have always been famous for their beauty; yet I must confess that few handsome faces have fallen in my way, though I sought them very attentively. Lovely children indeed, and particularly sweet little girls, I saw in plenty; whence I conceive that the climate, and endemial diseases, universally disfigure the person.

Every thing here appears pretty reasonable: but for society here are no resources; a few natural curiosities and antiquities are all that interest the stranger.

For the lover of natural history I must notice the number of aquatic plants which are found in the marshes, ponds, and canals, as well in Arles and its vicinity, as in the Carmagne. Among them are, the *Limonium maritimum*, *Atriplex maritima*, *Cheiranthus maritimus*, *Frankenia rampens*, *Rubeola maritima*, *Kali spinosum*, *Salsola*, *Alisma plantago*, *Lycopus palustris*, *Typha palustris major et minor* (of which the people of Marseilles make chair-bottoms), *Tamariscus Narbonensis, florib. pentandr.* (from which in Arles they make little casks, cups, and jugs, in which water receives a dissolving quality), &c.

The number of aquatic fowl is no less worthy of attention; for example, several rare species of the *Ardea* and *Scolopar*, which the ornithologist can here find, and can better describe than I. Quite as remarkable are the stone-quarries near Arles,

which have a stony property quite peculiar to themselves. The stone, which is sent to Marseilles and Toulon, is full of coral and other similar substances.

What the antiquarian will find particularly interesting here, is first an obelisk of granite which stands in the market-place, and is about fifty feet high. Antique it certainly is, and most probably belonged to a circus; but that it has been brought here from Egypt, is by no means clear. Thus much is however certain: that it was first discovered in 1389; but not dug up till 1675, when it was set up in honour of Louis XIV. The ornaments on the pedestal are much mutilated, and a tin cap of liberty is now found on the top.

Secondly, the amphitheatre, which history informs us was built by Julius Cesar. But, alas! it is in bad preservation: all the porticoes being built up; all the steps destroyed; and both within and without the main wall, houses are built. To judge of the size of the area, we must mount the top of a house, from which we may perceive that the whole must have consisted of about sixty arches. In the main wall there are some towers, which are most probably of Gothic origin.

Thirdly, the Elysian Fields, or *Alichamps* as they are here called. It is easy to perceive that they have been a burying-place; from the number of sarcophagi, both christian and heathen, which are indiscriminately scattered about. The most curious heathen antiquities belonging to them have been already described by Montfaucon, and are perhaps dispersed in different cabinets. The christian antiquities were preserved till the revolution in the neighbouring church of the Minorites: but were despoiled among other treasures in 1794; as were many of the finest sarcophagi, together with statues, paintings, monuments, &c. belonging to the cathedral church: nearly every thing has fallen before the revolutionary mania. To those who wish for mere historical information, I recommend the undermentioned treatise\*.

But I will say no more on a town which affords so little that is pleasant. It is seven o'clock in the evening; the diligence has just arrived, and the driver informs me there is a place to spare. I close this letter amidst the bustle of half a hundred conscripts and carters, who are all drinking and gaming. The whole inn is in an uproar, the spits with the roast meat are merrily turning round, and our good-natured fat host is preparing the wine. Farewell, my dear friend! I shall now repair with my three diligence-companions to a small room for supper, and hope to-morrow by this time to be safe at Nismes.

\* Mémoires sur l'Ancienneté de la Ville d'Arles, et sur ses Antiquités, par M. Anibert, 179. 12 L. 161.



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## LETTER VI.

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JOURNEY TO NISMES.—TRINQUETAILE.—ENTRANCE INTO LANGUEDOC.—VARIETIES.—PEOPLE.—SOIL.—AGRICULTURE.—BELLEGARDE.—REMARKS.—APPROACH TO NISMES.—VIEW.—ARRIVAL.—HOTEL DU LOUVRE.—TOPOGRAPHICAL WORK BY VINCENS.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

IN the midst of antiquities and silk-spools, olive and mulberry-trees, I am transposed, as it were, to another region. Yesterday morning, at nine, we separated; this was caused by changing with another diligence, which arrived an hour sooner. We were now ferried over to the Carmagne in a boat (which supplies the place of the bridge of boats carried away in 1789), struck through Trinquetaille, which forms a part of the suburbs of Arles; passed through meadows and fields, upon a moor-land perfectly resembling those in Lower Saxony, to the second arm of the Rhone; passed over it in a ferry-boat, and were at once in Languedoc.

The country, the people, in short, every thing I saw here, had quite a different appearance. The rough brutality of the natives of Provence had changed into a cunning insinuativeness, their violent gesticulation into an almost solemn and measured mien, their shrill voices into mellow tones. The ruddy complexion, fiery eyes, and jetty hair, were every where supplied by pale faces, blue eyes, light hair; even the black and brown garments gave place to light-blue or white.

The soil is no less changed than the people. Instead of a parched, barren ground, we trod on the most fruitful and luxuriant soil, flowery meadows, lovely fields watered by fresh streams, contrasted with dark hills of olive and other fruit-trees. In short, every thing here discovers a mild and fruitful disposition of nature, and a soft and gentle people.

Towards noon we arrived at Bellegarde, a pretty little village, encompassed with gardens, orchards, and mulberry plantations; every where domestic regularity, every where the greatest industry, and even perhaps a certain anxious parsimony was discoverable. The large wine-pitchers of Provence were here changed into bottles; the bread, not set whole before you on the table, but cut into pieces; the dishes appeared to us less, and the portions

smaller; even the wine itself appeared, from its paleness and light colour, to have received a dilution of water in the cellar.

From here onwards the roads are better, for the revolution itself has not been able completely to destroy the excellent *chaussées*. We now flew swiftly on between rows of budding trees till we came in sight of Nîmes, which lay in the midst of a spacious and beautiful plain, resembling a cultivated garden.

A row of hills extends on each side, skirted with villages and plantations, while on the opposite side of the vale the Tour-magné grandly closes the perspective with its venerable ruins.

Thus encompassed with endless vegetation and increasing sweets, we reached the suburbs, which we no sooner entered than we saw ourselves in a labyrinth of narrow, dirty streets, and industrious silk-manufacturers. We proceeded to the Hôtel du Louvre\*, which stands only in a miserable little street, but is very near to a large square.

Here I have taken possession of a corner room, from which I purpose writing to you every evening an account of whatever remarkable has happened during the day. I hope Nîmes will afford me sufficient matter, especially since in my researches I can avail myself of an excellent topographical work by Vincens, which contains a number of interesting remarks upon the climate, manufactures, inhabitants, agriculture, antiquities, &c. The careful regularity and arrangement will be the more acceptable to you, since there have been but a few copies of this valuable work printed, and those few are scarcely known out of this place†.

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## LETTER VII.

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CLIMATE OF NÎMES.—GENERAL TEMPERATURE.—TEMPERATURE OF THE DIFFERENT MONTHS.—SPRING.—SUMMER.—AUTUMN.—WINTER.—DEGREES OF COLD AND HEAT.—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MORNING AND EVENING TEMPERATURE.—REMARKS.—OTHER DIFFERENCES IN THE TEMPERATURE, AND THERMOMETRICAL OBSERVATIONS.

*Nîmes, Feb. 1804.*

**G**OD preserve you, my dear friend, from the climate of Nîmes! Let your physician say what he will, for once venture

\* The Louvre has very good rooms, but is neither cheered by the sun, nor prospects. The Luxembourg (immediately round the left-hand corner) in the same place, has its whole front towards the S. S. E.

† Topographie de la Ville de Nîmes et de sa Bailliée, par Jean Césaire Vincens, &c. publiée, avec des Notes, par Vincens St. Laurent. Nîmes, 1803-4, 24 livr.



to have a different opinion. I hope to prove that Nismes is, for persons in health very unpleasant, and for sick a perfectly unsuitable residence. But I will descend a little to particulars for the conviction of your doctor. This is an important point, which concerns the lives of so many sick persons, who travel hither at a great expence only to find disappointment.

With regard to the general temperature, the thermometer of Reaumur stands through the day in spring between  $15^{\circ}$ - $16^{\circ}$ , in summer at  $25^{\circ}$ , in autumn at  $17^{\circ}$ - $18^{\circ}$ , in winter  $7^{\circ}$ - $8^{\circ}$  warmth : hence follows, from a sixteen year's observation, a middle temperament of  $15^{\circ}$  Reaumur, except in particular cases, when it is very changeable.

To commence then with the spring months, March and April, it is by no means rare (when the north-east and north-west winds blow over the snow-clad Cevennes), to find the thermometer, at sun-rise, from one to two, even four degrees of cold ; towards noon, at twelve to fifteen degrees of heat. In March it even sometimes rises to twenty and twenty-one ; and in April, as soon as the snow is melted, to twenty-seven degrees of heat, although the nights remain at the same time damp and unpleasant.

With the beginning of May commences a parching heat of the sun, so that the thermometer is usually at 22 and  $24^{\circ}$  Reaumur, in the afternoon ; although in the morning it does not stand at more than thirteen to fourteen degrees of heat. Thus it remains till the middle of June, when it generally fixes at twenty-six or twenty-seven degrees.

In July and August the heat gains its highest degree, and maintains its power almost uninterruptedly. The thermometer rises from twenty-eight to thirty, and in some years, as for instance in 1769 and 1770, and even to six and thirty degrees. At the same time the difference between the morning and evening temperature continues always to be from nine to twelve degrees.

I shall close these details by some remarks which I have made myself ; the first of which relates to the difference in the morning and evening temperature. This difference appears to be calculated in an equal proportion from noon far greater here (in summer at least), than in any town in France. But this is easily accounted for from the situation of Nismes, where the rays of the meridian sun are reflected back from the chalk-hills, and from the uncommon clearness of the hemisphere.

For the same reasons it may be conceived that the difference should be greater, and always increasing as the summer solstice approaches ; and also that this difference should be less, and the decrease more rapid, the nearer the winter solstice draws on. Thus in the height of summer it reaches only from twelve to

fifteen degrees, and in the depth of winter only from four to seven degrees. Just the same difference in the given proportions is found in places where the above-mentioned reverberation cannot exist, which is in summer computed at only three degrees, and in winter at one and a half.

A second observation refers to the difference found in the temperature, partly in the twenty-four hours, partly in the course of a year, and partly between the thermometer in the sun and in the shade. The greatest variation of the temperature in twenty-four hours is twenty-eight degrees; the greatest difference of warmth and cold in the course of a year, forty degrees five minutes. The medium difference between the thermometer in the sun and in the shade, is three degrees five minutes. The greatest anomalies finally produced, appear by the before-given standard to have been observed two hours after sun rise, and the smallest at two in the afternoon.

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## LETTER VIII.

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CLIMATE OF NISMES.—CONTINUATION.—BAROMETRICAL OBSERVATIONS.—MEDIUM HEIGHT.—GREATER AND LESSER ELEVATIONS.—REMARKS UPON THIS COURSE. HYDROMETER.—ITS MIDDLE STATE AND COURSE.—EUDIOMETER.—REMARKS UPON BOTH INSTRUMENTS.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

YOU see, my dear friend, I send you not a line which might not be considered as sufficient proof. To-day I shall speak of the climate of Nismes, as given by the barometer; and before I have done with the subject, our doctor will surely have changed his opinion. The medium height of the barometer here is 28 inches, 2 lines; the warm months produce evidently a lower, and the cold ones a higher state. The middle height of January, February, March, October, November, and December, is 28 inches, 1-9; that of the other months, on the contrary, only 27 inches 10-6, shewing a difference of 2, 3, which naturally must in reality be greater, from the many thermometrical corrections.

The greatest elevations of the barometer are observed from the month of October to that of March, and the greatest fall from April to September; being usually at the highest in February, and the lowest in August. The greatest changes that take place in the four and twenty hours, produce about ten lines, and in the course of a year not quite two inches together.

But within these boundaries the barometer varies very frequently, especially when the wind takes the direction between



south and west, or south and east. As a rule, it may be said the barometer falls the most when the wind is south-east, and rises the most when the wind is north east.

From the medium of the hydrometer ( $40^{\circ} 4'$ ) aridity appears to be the general temperament, notwithstanding transitions to the extremest humidity, are both frequent and rapid. The month of August, the hottest and driest of all others, presents us with the most remarkable phenomena of this sort. The hydrometer at three in the afternoon often stands at  $40^{\circ}$ , and denotes at eight in the evening  $90^{\circ}$ , with double moisture, without the degree of heat being changed in equal proportion.

The hydrometer here shews a very high degree of aridity when the wind is north; a still greater when it is S. E. but when S. S. W. a yet greater degree of humidity. The influence of the evening air in the different parts of the town, produces a striking variation. When the thermometer, for example, stands at 20 degrees, which is not unfrequent in the spring, the hydrometer shews at sunset in the lower parts of the town, lying south,  $85^{\circ}$  degrees; and in others, lying north, and about fifteen toises higher, scarcely  $75^{\circ}$ .

By the eudiometer I observe the evaporation to be very considerable, particularly when the north winds blow, at which time it gains even in January above two lines in twenty-four hours, according to the greater or less violence of the wind. In summer, particularly from the 15th of July to the 15th of August, the evaporation is usually, with the same wind, regularly about four lines. On the contrary, with a west wind it is very small; with a south wind almost imperceptible, and with an east wind it totally ceases.

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## LETTER IX.

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CLIMATE OF NISMES CONTINUED.—WINDS.—CHIEF DIVISION.—NORTH AND SOUTH WINDS.—BISE AND MARIN.—GENERAL REMARKS.—CHIEF DIVISIONS OF THE NORTH WINDS.—DUE NORTH.—NORTH-EAST.—PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO THEIR PERIODS, CHANGES, AND EFFECTS.—SIX MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

**I** NOW come to the most important part of this climate: I mean the winds; and hope by their assistance completely to put our poor doctor to silence. You must know then, my dear friend, that next to Avignon, Nismes may be reckoned among the windiest towns of France; there being certainly sixty days in the year on which storms of wind, if not to say hurricanes, may be calcula-



ted upon. North and south winds, those very dry, and these very moist, interchange with each other incessantly; but upon the whole, the north appears the most prevalent. The former, with all its variations from east to west, is known by the generic name *Bise*; and the latter, with all its by-directions, under that of *Marin*. I will endeavour to entertain you with a circumstantial account of both, with their modifications; and if the doctor still remain unconverted—send him here as a punishment!

To commence then with the north wind when direct, it does not blow here either very often or with much violence. When the mountains of Dauphiné and Auvergne are covered with snow, it blows but weakly, though rather durably, at which time the weather is variable, and the cold at the most not above 3°: at all other times this wind appears in every respect changeable, although it is esteemed very healthy.

The north-east (Tramontane) with all its by-directions, although it does not belong to the most frequent appearances of this horizon, has a most uncommon influence on the temperature. One time it brings hoar frost, snow, and piercing cold; at another, heat and drought, then again continual rains. Not less various are its effects upon the animal and vegetable world; now promoting the soundness and vegetation of the seed; and now again blighting whole harvests, and engendering the most dangerous diseases.

As it comes from the Alps through the vales of Dauphiné and Provence, it is almost always very violent, blowing in gusts, and frequently spreading desolation. Sometimes it assists evaporation to a great degree; and in a few hours perfectly dries up the dirtiest streets. At other times it forces its way through defiles in the mountains, and causes water-spouts, which rise to twenty toises, and which are by the people called *foulets*.

As a rule, the north wind sets in with the two solstices, and continues with unabated force for a fortnight. The remainder of the year it is variable, seldom blowing four days, but sometimes however even eight or nine in succession. It frequently follows the warm damp south-east, or the suffocatingly hot south, with so sudden a change in the temperature, as often amounts to 4-5, and even 6-8 degrees, in a few hours. While only the highest tops of the Alps are covered with snow, the north-east wind is but moderately cold, and the thermometer falls at that time, even in the middle of winter only to 5 degrees above 0. No sooner however does the snow lie upon the lower chain of the Alps, than this wind brings with it a penetrating cold; and it may indeed be said that the climate of Nismes depends almost entirely on this wind, since it reigns nearly without interruption from November to February.



Its power begins to decrease in March, but still it hurts vegetation very much, by producing a sort of second winter, with rain and slight frosts. Besides, should it not be overpowered by the *Marin* or south-west wind, the growth of the seed, &c. is at an end; for then such a drought takes place, that not one drop of rain falls before September.

In summer the north-east is insufferably hot, the more from passing the Alps, already heated with the sun; this wind parches up all nature, and changes as it were each latent germ of vegetation. The only period when, impregnated with the exhalations from the Alps, it brings rain, is the autumnal equinox; but these rains continue so violently for eight, ten, and even fourteen days, that great floods are produced, without the water being able to penetrate the hard and parched-up soil.

The north-west is the last chief division of the north wind, with which I shall engage your attention. True it is, that this wind is quite as violent and stormy as the north-east, but it is always accompanied by fine weather, and injures neither animal nor vegetable nature. The most agreeable are the N. N. W. divisions, when it passes over the lower Alps, and becomes thereby in winter warmer, in summer cooler. At these times the thermometer seldom falls at any season so low as the freezing point.

The north-west blows the most regularly in the months of January, February, and March; if the north wind has not before gained the ascendancy. In April it is never perceived, and in the latter part of May and June seldom; with so much the more certainty it returns in July and August, and perceptibly cools the glowing atmosphere. If this wind can overpower the north, it prolongs very much the duration of the most beautiful and charming second summer until November. Should it on the contrary in December turn towards W. N. W. it brings rain, and sometimes sleet, and is called *rouergas* in Provence.

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## LETTER X.

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CLIMATE OF NISMES CONTINUED.—WINDS.—SECOND DIVISION.—SOUTH WIND, ITS GENERAL PROPERTIES, AND EFFECTS OF ITS VARIOUS DIRECTIONS.—THEIR PERIODICAL COURSE.—REMARKS UPON THE EAST AND WEST WINDS, AND THE GARBIN, WHICH IS PECULIAR TO THE TOWN AND COAST OF NISMES.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

**I**N my former letters I attacked the doctor on the north side, in my present I will shift to the south. In other words, if



the north winds have borne hard upon him, he will find the south still worse. Let him oppose them with what force he may, you will see he never can keep his ground.

You recollect that the south winds are here comprehended under the generic term *Marin*, because collectively, in spite of their various directions, they blow over the Mediterranean. If the north winds bring dryness, cheerfulness, and purity to the atmosphere; the south winds, on the contrary, bring damps, fogs, and foul vapours. They warm the air when the north winds have too much chilled it; or cool it (although much seldomer) when a preceding west has caused a too violent heat. The points of the compass make however some difference in its common properties and effects.

I shall begin with the direct south wind, which is extremely violent, brings many clouds with it, and continues for seven or eight days in succession without a drop of rain falling. When it rises at a small distance from the coast, and not directly from Africa, it is rather weak, and generally accompanied with drizzling rain. When it inclines a little to the west it is uncommonly unhealthy, as it collects a number of foul vapours from the morasses.

In summer, when there is a perfect calm, and that often happens here, this wind promotes putrefaction to such a degree, that the freshest meat is spoiled in a few hours, and the salt-petre is rapidly engendered. In winter the south wind, from whatever point of the compass it blows, produces an incredible dampness; every thing capable of being affected by it, changes its state, let it be ever so well preserved. The floors, for example, become incessantly wet, and the water runs down the walls, although the doors and windows be ever so carefully closed: sugar and salt melt even when inclosed in screw boxes; the linen becomes damp in the thickest presses, &c.

When this wind takes, in summer, a perfectly S. S. W. direction, it brings with it an insupportable heat and sultriness, and great swarms of gnats; in the winter, on the contrary, it frequently brings stinking and wetting fogs. If the south wind were one point towards the east, it causes frequent rains; and when it becomes full S. S. E. it resembles the Sirocco and Solano, filling the atmosphere as it were with a consuming glow of fire.

The periodical course of the south winds usually commences with the spring equinox, and brings a rain very salutary to the parched fields; this continues till May, when the weather becomes clearer, the rains give place to heavy dews, which are called *marin blanc*.

Towards the summer solstice, they are generally S. S. W. bringing thunder storms and passing showers. Towards autumn they become again S. E. but are not always attended with rain.



In winter they interchange with the north winds. So much for the *marin* and its various directions: and now a few words on the east and west winds; and on the *garbin* in particular, which is appropriate only to Nismes.

The east wind is damper still than the south-east, and in general blows more frequently. It most usually causes durable rains in the winter months, when it varies backwards and forwards upon the northern points of the compass. The wet produced by this wind is extremely unhealthy.

The west wind is to be regarded as the proper zephyr of Nismes, moderating the cold in winter, the heat in summer, and at all times equally pleasant and salubrious. It is called in the provincial jargon *Narbonnais* or *Lar*, as it inclines more or less to the south. Upon the whole, however, it blows but rarely. Sometimes it sets in about the middle of February; regularly in March or April; seldom in May and June; and in the other months hardly ever.

Finally, the *garbin*\*, or periodical sea wind, which is appropriate not only to Nismes, but to all the coasts of the Mediterranean, blows during the excessive heats of summer, i. e. from the beginning of July to the end of August. It commences in the morning at ten rather feebly, in south-east, and as it follows the sun, runs through every point of the horizon, during which, till two in the afternoon, it becomes progressively stronger; and ceases at six in the evening, in the north-west. It is extremely refreshing, and without it, the heat in the above-mentioned months would be insupportable.

## LETTER XI.

CLIMATE OF NISMES CONTINUED.—METEOROLOGICAL APPEARANCES.--RAIN, PARTICULARS RELATIVE TO.--SNOW.—FOGS.—DEWS.—RIME.—THUNDER STORMS.—DEVIATIONS OF THE MAGNETIC-NEEDLE.—GENERAL RECAPITULATION AND REVIEW OF THE CLIMATE.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

**T**HIS is the last letter which I shall write to you on the climate of this place; it shall contain the remaining meteorological remarks; make the doctor sick, even to fainting, and prevent all his patients from coming here.

To begin with the rain: only forty-two rainy days are yearly reckoned, and the mass of fallen water always amounts to 23

\* It extends itself about seven leagues inland; but loses strength in proportion to the distance; it always sets in with fine, and never with bad weather.



inches, 11 lines. This striking disproportion is easily explained, when we know that it always rains in torrents. In the months of August and September in particular, not less than from two to seven inches of water fall in a few hours; April and May are the only months which afford gentle penetrating rains. In general, September, October, March, and April, are months in which it rains the most; July, August, January, and February, the least, although the greatest changeableness of the climate consists in it.

Snowy weather seldom appears here. From the most careful observation during sixteen years, it has only happened twenty-seven times: it snows so little, as seldom to lie three inches deep; it lies but a few days; should it lie a week, it is thought very extraordinary. It snows most regularly, as to time and quantity, when the wind is N. E. and most frequently during the winter solstice, and in the month of January; but always in wetish flakes. Snow in February is no rarity, but snow in November and March is esteemed a meteorological anomaly; besides, it is worthy of observation, that it almost always sets in with a high wind.

Fogs (in the provincial dialect, called *neble*,) are seldom seen here; but it is remarkable, the most appear in summer, and the fewest in winter; in the former, usually when the wind is S. S. W. in the latter when it is E. N. E. In both cases they are stinking and unhealthy, but only in the latter case injurious to vegetation, when a part of the corn, vines, and olives, are sure to be destroyed. Besides these, (which are, notwithstanding the general prejudice, by no means without humidity) the winter fogs mostly happen in November and December.

The dews are here extremely heavy, particularly in the hot months, and frequently commence not more than half an hour after sunset. They are the most frequent when the wind is S. S. W. and by virtue of this wind, carry with them small particles of salt; whenever the wind is north, the dews are hardly perceptible. They are the most frequent from the beginning of spring to the end of autumn. At this period, the dews in some measure supply the want of rain, and are of great use to the land.

Rime, or hoar frost, (*plouvino*) is here in the months of April and November, very common, although only when the wind is very high, and also with the extremest cold. Rime is the strongest when the wind is moderately N. E. the slightest when it is calm N. W. and the most frequent in December. Rime often appears even in the latter end of October, and in the middle of April.

Storms are not frequent in Nismes; since they fall from the



Cevennes mountains, and follow the course of the rivers to the sea. They mostly happen in June, and if they once approach the town, they almost always do mischief in several parts. In summer little is to be feared from hail, but more so in the spring and last winter months, but in general it is trifling, and almost always mixed with rain.

The deviation of the magnet-needle, given as a middle number, is here  $19^{\circ} 55'$  W. The greatest deviations never amount to more than  $22''$ , and are chiefly observable in summer. But enough, and more than enough of the climate of Nismes. I will now concentrate the whole in a few grand conclusions, and the victory will be complete.

First then, the climate of Nismes affords the strangest contrasts, the most striking extremes; wet and dry, hot and cold, are experienced often in a few hours. No order, no gradation, no proper transition, either in the seasons or temperament. Here the spring is blended with the winter; the winter with the summer; the order of nature seems reversed, and every thing is stamped with the greatest variability.

Secondly, to speak of the seasons individually; the spring, though sometimes mild and rainy, is much oftener rough and stormy, and not seldom changes into a sultry summer, with burning hot days, damp nights, suffocating south winds, and foul fogs. The autumn has, it must be allowed, many charming days; yet even these are interrupted by frequent rains, and sometimes even rime and snow appear; finally, the winter fluctuates between cold bleak north, or damp relaxing south winds; and only now and then a truly fine day recalls to the mind the image of a southern spring in the so much valued and famed climate of Nismes.

Judge then yourself, my dear friend, whether it can be beneficial for pectoral diseases, hypochondrias, &c.—at the same time, ask your physician if he can, in conscience, and as an honest man, defend it any longer?—I repeat, whoever sends his patients here, can never have visited the place himself.

## LETTER XII.

TOPOGRAPHICAL REMARKS.—POSITION AND SITUATION.  
 —TOWN AND SUBURBS.—REMARKS ON ITS CIRCUMFER-  
 RENCE AND STRUCTURE.—DOMESTIC ECONOMY.—RE-  
 MARKS ON THE WATER, WINE, AND OTHER CHIEF NE-  
 CESSARIES.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

**H**AVING concluded my remarks on the climate, I will proceed to make a few topographical observations, not omitting domestic economy.

Nismes,  $43^{\circ} 50' 35''$  N. Lat. and  $2^{\circ} 1' 11''$  Lon. eastward of Paris, is elevated about  $143^{\circ}$  above the surface of the sea; and lies in a fertile valley, circumscribed by two parallel rows of hills, open to the N. E. and S. W. The whole forms an immense irregular quadrangle, extending itself from N. to S. and filled by two chief divisions, the town itself, and the eight suburbs. The flat contents of the former are computed at one thousand five hundred and fifty toises, and that of the latter at double the number; the circumference of the whole is computed at three thousand toises. The population, according to the latest and best calculations, amounts to between 39,000 and 40,000 souls.

The town offers nothing but a labyrinth of streets, intersecting each other in innumerable directions, and is extremely close and unhealthy. The houses are small; and inconvenient; the ground floors are mostly sunk into the earth, and even the upper ones are almost always deficient in light and air. Besides, they are all built with the hardest free-stone, and the plaister appears to consist of a sort of sparry lime-stone.

The suburbs, however, are much more airy and healthful, containing broad and straight streets, gardens, avenues, squares, and handsome houses in abundance. The Crucimale and the Richelieu are the most agreeable and healthful spots in the suburbs, both standing on rather high terraces, refreshed with fine breezes, warmed by the sun, and provided with excellent water. The most unhealthy places, on the contrary, are the fauxbourgs St. Laurent and de la Boncarie; the first on account of the numerous cocoa coppers, and the last on account of the many lime-kilns: notwithstanding there are many fine gardens to be met with. Nismes contains very few fine modern buildings; but the more numer-



ous are the remains of Roman antiquity, to the mention of which I shall devote a couple of separate letters.

Provisions, &c. are rather reasonable; lodging, dinner, and supper may be had at the Luxembourg and Louvre, for from eight to nine livres a day; in the suburbs two neatly furnished rooms may be had for from twenty to thirty livres a month; in these houses board is also given, if required. But firing is extremely dear, the wood and coals all coming from the Cevennes.

The water here is as bad as can be conceived, and contains much lime and selenite. In places where there are many dye-houses, drains, &c. it contracts almost always, on account of the great shallowness of the springs, a number of heterogeneous particles. The springs in the northern parts of the town, particularly in the fauxbourg Crucimale, appear to be the very purest and best. The mineral spring has from its visitors obtained the character of being saline and laxative: to keep up its reputation, the speculating waiters incorporate it with all sorts of drastics. But I will proceed to the wine, over which it is easy to forget the badness of the water.

Both red and white wines are to be had here, and the last justly deserves the estimation in which it is held; both indeed have a certain spirituous flavour, but are extremely strengthening and nourishing, although they soon affect the head, even if very moderately enjoyed.

A small difference is made in the prices of the red and white wines, a bottle of the former (of a good quality) costing ten, and the latter twelve sous: besides these, very good Frontignac may be found here at forty, and old Lunel at fifty sous; but which are, notwithstanding, very different from the Hanseatic wines: Languedoc, and other wines may be had here at a very moderate expense.

The fineness of the bread and meat, immediately remind the traveller of the luxuriant meadows and pastures of Languedoc. The fish, which is had either immediately from the sea, or from the salt ponds, is both abundant and delicious. Vegetables and fruits are of equal value, and the seeds of the former constitute an important branch of trade.

### CHAP. XIII.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE POLICE OF NISMES.—  
SOCIAL LIFE.—WALKS IN THE TOWN.—ESPLANADE.—  
THE COURSE.—PARK.—EXCURSIONS.—THEATRE.—  
COFFEE-HOUSES.—LITERARY RESOURCES.—REMARKS.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

**Y**OUR fears are groundless, my dear friend, I have by no means forgotten to speak of the police of this place; my only difficulty lies in speaking according to truth and propriety. But since you insist on it, I will begin with informing you, that the influence of the all-subverting revolution is in this respect still felt. There is indeed a police bureau, organized like the fourth section of prefecturates; but it appears upon the whole, perhaps for want of sufficient support, by no means active enough. This I think I can maintain in one weighty point at least.

To the cleanliness of the streets, there appears to be not the least regard. In the town particularly, all sorts of filth remains before the doors; even in the populous quarter *Les Bourgades*, the dung is prepared, as in the small provincial towns: add to this, the slaughtering of all animals before the doors; and that the sinks from all manufactories run into the streets; that the foul dregs of all kinds of preparations are thrown there; that the north-wind seldom blows, and leaves the greater influence for the south. If you take all this into consideration, you will perceive that a negligence in the police, which so much adds to the mortality of a town, can only be excused by their want of resources.

Here is no great want of social intercourse, and the inhabitants of this place are upon the whole, a tolerably social and obliging people. To those who like a walk, without going far for it, I recommend the Esplanade, between the suburbs *Richelieu* and *la Bouronne*; the Course, in the *fauxbourg St. Laurent*, and the Park, as it is called, near the famous spring. The esplanade is the most resorted to in summer, the course in winter, and the park in spring.

For strangers, the former possesses the greatest attractions, on account of its fine prospects; and the latter, for its remarkable springs; yet both are exposed to the wind. Those who like more



extensive walks, will find them in the country which surrounds the town, and in the whole district le Faillable.

The lovers of other amusements are provided with two theatres (the largest of which, in the town, is pretty good), several neat coffee-houses, (among which the Café de Martinet deserves notice) balls, concerts, and licensed gaming-houses.

Those who like reading, will find full satisfaction in the public library of the Lyceum, open every other day, near the great theatre, and in the shops of many good booksellers.

Finally, those who like to pass their time in studying of antiquity, natural history, or rural life, will find full employment in contemplating the splendid ruins of antiquity and surrounding scenery of Nismes; and in examining the various interesting cabinets which are here open to their inspection. I shall avail myself of these advantages, and intend devoting a few letters to the subjects they offer, which I wish however to recommend to your kind indulgence.

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## LETTER XIV.

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COMMERCE OF NISMES.—SILK TRADE.—RAW SILK.—SPUN SILK.—SILK MANUFACTURE; REMARKS UPON IT.—CLOTH TRADE.—LINEN AND LACE TRADE.—CORN TRADE.—SEED TRADE.—TRADE IN DRUGS.—LEATHER TRADE.—PARTICULARS.—GENERAL RETROSPECT.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

**P**REPARE yourself, my dear friend, to read in this letter of nothing but trade. I have been employed during the whole of this day in collecting information concerning the commercial relations of Nismes; and will impart to you all that I have heard and read on the subject. The trade of Nismes branches into several divisions, the first and chief of which is formed by the silk trade; which is again divided into three parts, namely, the trade in raw silk, spun silk, and silk manufactures. That in raw silk may be either active or passive: active, since in plentiful years much is sold to the other provinces; and passive, when foreign silk is imported either for immediate use, or for more extensive debit as transit goods. The trade in spun silk extends itself to every sort and possible preparation, and descends even to flock and florét silks: it is, indeed, confined totally to the supply of the town manufactories; yet they sell every year, upon an average, fifty thousand pounds. The trade in silk manufactures is divided into that in ribands, stockings, floret, and



stuffs. The ribands are sold to the amount of 158,000 pieces, which, if calculated at the average price of 50 sous, produces a sum of 392,000 livres: they are dispersed over all France, and a great part of Europe.

Formerly not less than a hundred thousand dozen of silk stockings were disposed of in Europe, of which at least a sixth part went to Spain; but the preference given to English silk stockings in the northern parts of Europe, and the regulations in Spain which exclude the French, have materially diminished this branch of exportation; but yet it remains one of the most considerable and lucrative in Nismes, since it may be estimated at 5,616,000 livres yearly.

The trade in silk stuffs embraces also sarsnets, and stuffs made of woollen and silk, which are called *burats*. The former, on account of their cheapness, lightness, and variety of patterns, are exported annually, throughout all Europe, to the amount of 4,875,000 livres. Of the latter, which also have a good appearance, there is usually sent partly to other parts of France, and partly to Italy, Spain, and Portugal, every year, to the amount of about 750,000 livres.

I now come to the second chief division of the Nismes trade. A great part of the cloths and other woollen stuffs which are manufactured in the province, pass through the hands of the great woollen-drapers of this place, and receive here their last finishing; after which they are exported by sea and land under the general title of Languedoc cloths: including the retail trade, this branch amounts to 2,500,000 livres.

A third branch is formed by the linen and lace trade, which, in union with other manufactures, produces also annually 2,500,000 livres. Corn constitutes a fourth branch; and, including the trade in seeds and drugs, affords an annual produce of 2,100,000 livres.

The corn trade is partly active and partly passive: active, when they send corn to Languedoc and Burgundy; and passive, when in bad years they receive it from Italy and Africa. The seed trade is very considerable to Holland, England, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia, where the seeds of Nismes are in great repute. The trade in drugs is particularly lively with the Cevennes, and is carried on by exchange. The leather trade is, finally, the most active in Spain, Italy, and the interior parts of the republic: it amounts yearly to about 440,000 livres.

Having communicated to you what knowledge I have been able to gain of the trade of Nismes, I shall affix to this letter a view of its whole produce.



*View and particular Statement of the Trade of Nismes.*

	Livres.
Silk trade	
Raw and spun silk .....	2,350,000
Ribbands .....	392,500
Stockings .....	5,616,000
Sarsenet .....	4,875,000
Burats .....	750,000
Cloth trade .....	2,500,000
Linen and lace trade .....	2,500,000
Corn, seed, and drug trade .....	2,100,000
Leather trade .....	440,000
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Sum total	21,523,500

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**LETTER XV.**

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INDUSTRIOUS ECONOMY OF NISMES.—SILK MANUFACTURERS AND THEIR VARIOUS CLASSES.—CLOTH-SHEARERS, WEAVERS, AND BOBBIN-MAKERS.—GARDENERS AND TANNERS.—GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE INHABITANTS OF NISMES; THEIR GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS, PARTICULAR CHARACTERISTICS.—MANUFACTURERS.—LABOURING MANUFACTURERS.—CIVIL RESTRICTIONS OF BOTH.—DOMESTIC ECONOMY OF NISMES.

*Nismes, February, 1804.*

**Y**OU have so well received my last on the commerce of this place, that I am encouraged in the present to treat of that industry which forms its basis. Above, the manufacturers of silk are distinguished through all their ramifications, from the first preparation of the silk to the last perfection of it.

In winding the silk from the cods, spinning, reeling, and twisting, &c. above two thousand persons are employed, chiefly consisting of women. Of ribband-weavers, here are a hundred and twenty; of stocking weavers, four thousand; of women employed in sewing and knitting stockings, two thousand three hundred; of taffety and burat manufacturers, three thousand; of floret silk-dressers, one thousand; and of dyers, a hundred and sixty.

There are about sixty cloth-shearers; about thirty bobbin-lace-makers; nine hundred and fifty gardeners; and about forty-tan-



ners; you perceive by this statement, that the persons employed in the silk manufacture, are by far the most numerous.

Thus we find, according to this computation of the inhabitants, half of them to consist of labouring manufacturers, artisans, and mechanics; one fourth of speculators, manufacturers, and rentiers; and one fourth of day-labourers, porters, servants, &c. I will endeavour to give you first a general outline of these people, and then a more particular account of their different classes; which may at any rate contribute to a general view of the French people.

The physical and moral character of the native of Nismes, exhibits, as I may say, a certain mixture of fire and water peculiar to itself; it seems to bear the stamp of the climate as above described. The figure exhibits a sort of stoutness divested of strength; the countenance possesses a delicate attraction, without being intellectual; the hue, the hair, the eyes, discover a degree of lassitude, which is, notwithstanding, united with much that is pleasing.

In a moral point, the inhabitant of Nismes appears to possess more violence than strength; more impetuosity than cheerfulness; more shrewdness than sense, united with sociability and good-nature; but which, by the way, will not bear putting to the test.

The different classes, however, as is natural to suppose, present moral and physical variations of character, according to their different modes of life. The opulent merchant, the rich manufacturer, has, in his whole *tournure*, that mercantile formality, that counting-house punctuality, which is generally found among the wealthy traders of country towns. If he be a native of Nismes, he is, as a rule, tall and haggard, though graceful; but if he be a native of the Cevennes, and one of the many who rise by their industry, he is distinguished by his robustness. If he be a Catholic, there is nothing remarkable in his gait; but if he be a Protestant, an air which I cannot positively disapprove, but which appeared to me a little methodistical.

These merchants and manufacturers spend nearly the whole day in their counting-houses, either in weighing money, writing, making up accounts, or receiving goods; and only amuse themselves in an evening in a select circle in summer, in a garden; and in winter in a large room hired and kept for the purpose. They generally inhabit the most unhealthy part of the town, their choice being alone determined by the nearness to their manufactory, or the size and convenience of their warehouses. They live for the most part rather meanly, especially since their gains have been so much diminished. There is a



narrowness in the nature of all their speculations ; and still more in the character of the natives of Languedoc, in which a degree of parsimony is always to be observed. They are, on the contrary, while young clerks, remarkable for extravagance.

The working part of the community, among whom are many from the Cevennes, from Lyons, and Avignon, are distinguished upon the whole by their flightiness and self-sufficiency, and still more by their licentiousness. The men love liquor and gaming ; and the women, of whom you recollect great numbers are employed in the manufactories, abandon themselves to the grossest irregularities.

The lot of the working poor, particularly manufacturers, is truly miserable. Their abode is generally damp, dark, several feet under ground, and situated in the most unhealthy parts of the town. Among their coarse and wretched food, pork and tough salt-fish form the best dishes ; their cloathing is such as in Germany is appointed for prisoners in houses of correction. Here you have a sketch of the existence of that numerous and unfortunate class of beings, whose time is devoted to the preparation of luxuries for others, and whose lives form one unvaried scene of suffering.

If, in addition to this, we reflect that these persons are not paid more than thirty or six and thirty sous daily for working in the summer, from five in the morning till nine in the evening ; in winter, from six in the morning till ten or eleven at night ; that they are only allowed half an hour for breakfasting, an hour for dining, and, according to an established custom, half an hour in the twilight for taking a *walk*, and that many of them are females, we shall be surely led to conclude, that all manufactories are fundamentally injurious, and that only their produce can be pleasant or desirable.

But I will now proceed from their characteristics to speak of the civil connection between them and their employers. This connection has been regulated, as I think, very wisely by a Consular decree, by which all tumultuous proceedings among the work-people are punished with fines or imprisonment ; and the masters, on the other hand, are threatened with punishment for injustice or oppression. I think it would be very interesting could the various codes relating to the labouring manufacturers of the principal towns be collected and compared with each other, for the purpose of extracting all that might be applicable. Thus a complete code would be obtained, upon the utility of which I am certain your opinion and mine must accord.

I shall conclude this letter with a few remarks upon the servants of Nismes, among whom, as in most other places, the



females are the most numerous. This class is here as bad as it can possibly be. More rude, lazy, licentious, dishonest, and dirty servants cannot exist, although the females, particularly those from the Cevennes, are, upon the whole, far from ugly. The only good cooks, &c. found in Nismes, are from Provence, particularly from the former district; others come from Lyons, &c. and are distinguished, though not for their modesty or fidelity, at least for their knowledge, industry, and cleanliness.

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## LETTER XVI.

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DISEASES OF NISMES.—COMPLAINTS IN GENERAL.—COMPLAINTS OF PARTICULAR CLASSES, LABOURING MANUFACTURERS, SPINNERS, RIBBAND-MAKERS, STOCKING-MAKERS, STOCKING-SEWERS, TAFFETY AND BURAT MANUFACTURERS, FLORET SILK-PRESSERS.—SOME REMARKS UPON THE LENGTH OF THEIR LIVES AND MORTALITY.

*Nismes, February, 1804.*

**I**N order to present my subject to you in every point of view, I must not pass over in silence the diseases of the place. To this end I hope you will not think the following remarks unworthy your approbation.

The most prevalent diseases of Nismes are either bilious or catarrhal, as may be easily imagined from the nature of the climate. The innumerable modifications, fluctuations, and sudden changes of the same, produce a number of other complaints, among which is the endemial intermittent fever, in its most virulent degree; it often proves very fatal.

Independent of these local complaints, the labouring manufacturers are exposed to others, peculiar to their particular occupations. Thus we find the women who wind off, spin, and twist the silk, are for the most part liable to tightness of the breast, rheumatisms, imposthumes, and putrid fevers. Not less afflicted are the children employed in turning the silk, being subject to spitting blood, vomiting, tumours on the arms and legs, and similar diseases, easily engendered by such a fatiguing employment in so unhealthy an atmosphere.

The ribband-makers are exposed to the most dangerous pectoral diseases, lameness, sore legs, inflammation of the bowels, and violent fevers.

The stocking-makers, the most healthy class, are, notwithstanding, subject to hemorrhages, weak eyes, and tremblings.



The women employed in sewing and knitting stockings we find subject to the most complicated abdominal diseases, together with hysterics, defluations of the eyes, &c.: besides, this class may be known by their sunk heads and round shoulders, of which the right always projects.

The persons employed in the taffety and burat manufactories, suffer mostly from pulmonary ossifications and phthisis, besides being subject, through their whole lives, to articular diseases, lameness, obstinate astringency, ulcerations of the legs, &c. These two classes are the most unhealthy of all, the nature of their labour being so calculated as to destroy the constitution. It has been computed that one of these labouring manufacturers makes, in every minute, at least *three-and-twenty* violent exertions, and every day from *seven* to *twenty* thousand.

The diseases incident to the floret silk-pressers are mostly pains in the limbs and breast, difficult respirations, inflamed eyes, &c. From the hardness of the labour, and the unhealthiness of their working-rooms, for which they chuse the dampest places under ground, we find the strongest woman's health ruined in two or three months. Can it then be a matter of surprize, that in a place where both the climate and technical order of things conspire to destroy the vital principle, that the middle age should not exceed, at most, twenty-five; that the surplus of births does not, on an average, amount to more than ninety, although the women are said to be very prolific; that with a population of at most forty thousand souls, the deaths, calculated one year with another, amount to twenty-three out of every hundred; and that, finally, the number of old persons should be very small.

The greatest mortality takes place from the summer solstice till the autumn equinox. In August, particularly, it is not rare to reckon fifty deaths in a week. The epidemical rage of the small-pox no doubt contributes much to increase the mortality; from which it is much to be wished that vaccination were here also introduced.



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## LETTER XVII.

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PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF NISMES.—PHILANTHROPICAL INSTITUTIONS.—HOSPICE D'HUMANITE.—HOSPICE CIVIL ET MILITAIRE.—ŒUVRE DE LA MISERICORDE.—REMARKS ON RUMFORD SOUP.—LOMBARD.—LITERARY INSTITUTIONS.—CENTRAL SCHOOL, NOW LYCEUM.—COURS D'ACCOUCHEMENT.—ACADEMIE DU GARDE, CHIEF MEMBERS.—SOCIETE DE MEDICINE.—SOCIETE D'AGRICULTURE.—PETITES AFFICHES DU GARDE.—THE LIBRARY OF THE LYCEUM.—THE CABINET OF BUCHET.—BOOK-SELLING.—COMMUNICATIONS.

*Nismes, February, 1804.*

I NOW proceed to speak of the public institutions of Nismes, which, in many respects, deserve our attention, and shall distinguish them by philanthropic and literary.

To commence then with the former, let me recommend to your attention the Hospice d'Humanité, formerly known by the general term hospital. This was once a place for the reception of old and poor persons of both sexes, and was at the same time used for sick, lunatics, orphans, and foundlings. The persons were attended by the nuns called "Dames de Nevers," whose order has been wisely restored by the government; but with regard to the internal arrangements, particularly their administration, much still remains to be done. The greatest complaints are made against the food and treatment of the sick, as also against the disproportionate mortality of the children. Not less reprobable is the construction of the building, in which one division of the wards, towards the north, is the whole year without sun, and always damp and unhealthy; while in others, towards the south, a heat prevails in the hot months of 45 degrees of Reaumur; and every part is filled with insects. In this latter are deposited mostly lunatics, of which, by the way, here are not reckoned less than one to each thousand of the population, and always two women to one man.

A second institution here is the former "Hotel Dieu," now called Hospice Civil et Militaire, in which attendance is administered by the nuns well known by the name of "Dames de St. Joseph." They are praised for diligence, but not for clean-



liness or regularity, although the apartment allotted to the military is said to be the most supportable.

A third institution, called *Œuvre de la Misericorde*, is devoted alone to the relief of the poor in their own houses. The whole is regulated by the *sœurs grises*; and from the house bread, meat, medicine, linen, &c. are distributed to the poor of every quarter. It is said to stand in the place of the former *Hospice de Charité*, which, from the failure of its revenues, went to decay; and which, notwithstanding its great donations, was badly administered. I have been assured that the new institution has many preferences, and is supported with much zeal by the rich inhabitants. This is certainly rendered the more necessary, since the excellent institution known so well by the title of *Association Patriotique*, for the relief of the distressed labouring manufacturers, has been, by the revolution, deprived of its considerable capital.

Not without astonishment did I hear of the falling off of the benevolent Rumford Soup Institution, which had been commenced by some philanthropic persons. This took place not from any diminution of the public zeal, but for want of partakers. The poor manufacturers shew a decided detestation of it, arising from no physical reason, but from a certain ridiculous and pitiable pride. I must observe, that the funds of the former useful institution for the poor, called the Lombard, were also plundered during the revolution. They speak, however, of its restoration, which appears indispensable in such a town.

With regard to literary institutions, I mention, first, the Central School, now the Lyceum. It has hitherto had very good teachers, two of whom have opened boarding schools; from what is at present known of them, their success is much to be wished. Of the other four or five public institutions which were in Nîmes before the revolution, there exists at this time not one. One instituted in 1787, for the instruction of women in the obstetric art, has been, though very imperfectly, restored under the direction of professor Sarray, and is now denominated *Cours d'Accouchemens*.

To supply, however, this deficiency, the former *Académie de Nîmes*, afterwards called *Lycée du Garde*, has been renewed under the title of *Académie du Garde*. This has been effected chiefly by the zeal of the learned and humane Prefect Dubois. It is divided into six sections, which are devoted to politics, agriculture, trade, industry, mathematics, physics, literature, and the arts. Among the members I have observed the following famous and well-known names:—Banks, Barbé, Marbois, Bodoni, Buonaparte, Bourgoing, Caillard, Cambacères, Cavanilles, Chaptal,



d'Anse de Villoison, Fourcroy, Prince Dimitry Gallizin, Goethe, Heyne, Hufeland (the physician), Lacepede, Lagrange, Lalande, Laplace, Lebrun, Millin, Pinel, Portalis, Roederer, Van Swinden, Talleyrand, Tischbein, Wieland, and Von Zach.

The place of the former College de Medicine is also supplied by a Societ  de Medicine, which is said already to have effected much good. In addition to these learned societies, a Societ  d'Agriculture is added, which may doubtless produce many useful improvements. A part of their hints, proposals, &c. are to be found in the Petites Affiches du Gard, a sort of provincial paper which appears twice a week at Nismes, in octavo, and contains much useful information for strangers.

This leads me to the resources, libraries, collections, &c. upon which I must make a few remarks. I wish first to direct your attention to the public library of the Lyceum, where at present the famous collection of Seguier is to be found. The library is estimated at 30,000 volumes; among which are many valuable works on natural history, collected from the private cabinets which have been confiscated; there is also a rich cabinet of medals. It is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from ten to twelve in the forenoon, and from three to five in the afternoon. The librarian is a Monsieur Trelis, a very civil and obliging man.

Besides the abovementioned, we meet with several circulating libraries, well stocked, also reading societies and booksellers, at Nismes. Buchet Faux Calgiveres is proprietor of a considerable cabinet of curiosities, which I must describe more particularly.

Besides a number of Egyptian, Indian, Etrurian, Grecian, Roman, and other antiquities of every kind, we find a tolerably complete *suite* of Grecian and Roman coins, amounting to three thousand in number; several artificial curiosities of wood, wax, ivory, &c.; a small collection of rare or remarkable pictures of the three chief schools; various technological singularities, among which are, an old firelock, with powder-horn, &c. bearing marks of being among the first of the invention; and a number of scarce books and MSS. mostly French, among which is one bearing the date of 1407, on parchment, with six hundred and sixty miniatures; it appears to have been a royal prayer-book from its containing a calendar and the usual prayers to the Holy Virgin, together with the life of our Saviour. It is bound in green morocco, with gilt edges, and is estimated at 4,800 livres.

This cabinet may be visited daily, from seven till twelve in the forenoon, or from three till seven in the afternoon, for the trifling sum of thirty sous each person. As the good old friendly



Buchet has been collecting this cabinet for thirty-seven years; he regards it as his darling child, and is always desirous of showing it himself to strangers. He appears to possess a good stock of knowledge in this department, and has likewise a tolerably complete collection of works on the principal antiquities of the southern part of France.

The situation of Nismes affords it three grand and considerable *routes* for communication; from Paris and its *route*, Marseilles and *route*, and that from Toulouse and *route*. The couriers throughout France take, as you will surely know, besides the letters, also passengers at about thirty sous a league.

The first great diligence coming and going daily to and from Nismes, is that from Avignon to Toulouse, and from Toulouse (always by Montpellier and Nismes) to Avignon. From March to October, it arrives in the forenoon at ten o'clock, and sets off again as early as one; from November to February, on the other hand, it gets into Nismes at four in the evening, and does not set off before the next morning.

Besides this daily diligence from and to Montpellier, a second has been established, which sets off in the summer at four in the morning, and in the winter at five. It corresponds with the direct diligence from Barrachin, which comes every other day from Marseilles, and has its inn in the Louvre itself, on the right hand of the entrance into the yard.

There are two other daily conveyances in Nismes, going backward and forward to Alais and Vigan, and also the Fourgons as they are termed, to Beaucaire; besides coaches three times a week to Elzes, and diligences to Marseilles by Arles, and frequent coaches and cabriolets to the *Pont St. Esprit*, and a number of other accommodations to the Cevennes, the southern and northern parts of France, for which enquiries may be made in the Louvre, the Luxemburg, and the *rue Notre Dame*, at the widow Gras's, and Dudon's, &c.

### LETTER XVIII.

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ON THE ANTIQUITY OF NISMES.—UNIVERSAL NOTICES AND RESOURCES.—THE AMPHITHEATRE.—THE JULIAN TEMPLE.—LA TOUR MAGNE.—THE DIANA TEMPLE.—PARTICULARS.—FIRST IMPRESSIONS.—DIMENSIONS.—DESTINY,—PRESENT CONDITION.—NUMBER OF OTHER ANTIQUITIES.—SOME DETAILS ON THE FAMOUS SPRING.

*Nismes, February, 1804.*

THIS letter is penned from amidst the ruins of Nismes, which have acquired the town so just and universal a reputation. Follow me, my dear friend, through all the interesting tracts, and I will promise not to weary you by too long a rout. Great as my devotion is to this pursuit, I shall content myself with giving you an appropriate sketch of this ample subject, which may serve as a guide for you or any traveller desirous of visiting this antiquarian repository. If you wish to enter into the minutia of this science with the same ardour as I have done, I should then recommend to you Menard †, Vincens‡, and Clerisseau's || masterly paintings.

The first, greatest, and most splendid monument of antiquity, which can be admired at Nismes, is the Roman amphitheatre, perhaps the only one that has been so well preserved. It lies in the suburbs, very near the esplanade, but is viewed best from the other side, particularly in the middle of the street leading to the course. Whoever has been in Italy, will enter into my feelings as fully as you can, when I speak of the solemn and awful sensations awakened by the first view of this grand object. We feel that another world has existed, even surpassing the present in strength and greatness, and the reflection is attended with no favourable impressions towards the pigmy forms and creations

† *Histoire de Nismes*, p. Leon Menard. 7. vol. 4. 1750—1758. The whole seventh volume is dedicated to antiquities, at least to as many as were discovered to the year 1758.

‡ In the *Topographie de Nismes* before cited. He describes every antiquity found since 1758 to 1802.

|| *Antiquités de la France*. p. Clerisseau vol. i. 1788, fol.



of the arts in their present existing state. How much then are these impressions heightened by a contemplation of this structure in the stillness of a moonlight evening.

The amphitheatre is of an elliptic form, and built merely of large free-stone, many toises long, without any mortar or cement. Its exterior circumference is estimated at one thousand one hundred and forty French feet, and the height of the whole at sixty-six. The great diameter from east to west is four hundred and five feet, the smallest, from north to south, three hundred and seventeen feet. It consists of two stories, each divided into sixty arcades, without reckoning the attic, that adorns the whole like a massive crown. The interior is encircled by thirty-two large rows of seats, which appear sufficiently spacious to hold sixteen or seventeen thousand persons.

On the outside the amphitheatre is at present left tolerably open, one side only being built in; but the interior is unfortunately occupied for the most part with buildings of all descriptions. The upper gallery is indeed left so clear that we can walk entirely round the edifice; the under part, on the contrary, is always used for barbers' stalls, cookshops &c. One of these places is set apart for the habitation of the ignorant cicerone who usually shows the upper gallery to strangers, for a compensation of from thirty to sixty sous.

This amphitheatre would surely have been cleared, had the revolution not intervened. The government, the province, and the town had contributed great sums to this purpose, and a beginning had already been made in the labour. The unhappy years which however succeeded, defeated every similar good object, notwithstanding the estimable Girod Pouzol, as representative of the people in 1794, revived the hopes on this matter. At present all eyes are turned to a man who has shown a predilection to antiquity, on every great occasion, and who will surely not overlook this species of ancient refinement. I at least form great expectations of Bonaparte's influence and activity in preserving these vestiges of human ingenuity.

If the amphitheatre awaken admiration from its grand, solemn, and majestic character, the Julian Temple, here called *Maison Carrée*, not very distant from it, attracts the observer by its elegance, symmetry, and perfect beauty. Clothed in all the light and lovely forms of youthful grace, this charming edifice is a masterpiece of Roman architecture. It rests on a base five foot high, forming an oblong quadrangle seventy-two French feet in length, and thirty-six in breadth. Round the whole are thirty chamfered or channelled pillars,



ten of which bear the fronton of the main façade, by which a peristyle of twelve steps is formed.

This peristyle is the only part of the *Maison Carrée* that has been damaged, though it has been used for very different purposes, one time serving as a stable, and another time as a Capuchin chapel. There is a report of erecting a statue of *Buonaparte* in it, which is certainly an idea more suited to the place. In this case the old cloister will be pulled down, which disfigures this fine building in one quarter.

On leaving the Julian Temple to the left, we at length reach the famous spring, above which stands *Tour Magne* on a high chalk hill. In all probability this antique watch-tower was four or five stories high, yet so erected as to rise to a point. At present the ruins of two only are visible, the lowest being eighty-one French feet in diameter. Here and there a thyme or or lavender bush sprouts out from the old brown stone work; and sometimes we discover even a small olive-tree in this monument of the ancient heroic world.

Far below the brink of the spring are perceived the ruins of a supposed *Diana's* temple, but which was properly a sort of Pantheon. The four main walls with the bas-reliefs introduced in the inside are still remaining; but the fragments of the magnificent columns that surrounded the temple are very scattered and indistinguishable. Every thing evinces, however, that this edifice was the offspring of the greatest genius and refinement in the Roman artists; and its destruction during the religious wars in Languedoc, is so much the more to be lamented.

I could entertain you, my dear friend, with descriptions of innumerable ruins, statues, mosaics, and antiquities. But having once referred you to those above-mentioned, I must conclude with some particulars on the famous spring, which must attract every one's attention.

It is found, as I before observed, at the foot of a barren chalk hill, or the *Garrigue*, on the summit of which stands *la Tour Magne*. Here it rises from a tolerably deep and broad bason, bordered with very beautiful water plants. Since the laying out of the park it has been carried into many large canals, which are provided with magnificent bridges.

In its usual state, the spring yields about two hundred and thirty inches of water; but in a great drought, only one hundred and forty-five. On the other hand it sometimes swells from perpetual rains, to such an extraordinary height, that the water will often rise three feet higher than usual.

Excellent as this water may be, it unfortunately by no means



supplies the wants of the inhabitants here, who are compelled to draw resources from other springs : this beautiful fountain being used only by the washerwomen at the lower canal. In the months of May to September, when the water is at the lowest, all these canals are usually too shallow to flow off, which occasions an extremely unpleasant smell, and renders the beautiful promenade here insupportable to the lovers of walking.

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## LETTER XIX.

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AGRICULTURAL REMARKS.—COUNTRY OF NISMES.—SOIL.—PRODUCTS.—MODES OF HUSBANDRY.—CULTURE OF CORN.—PROPER CULTIVATION OF GRAIN.—WHEAT.—SEED TIME.—HARVEST AND CROP.—TREADING OUT.—CULTURE OF RYE, BARLEY, AND OATS.

*Nismes, February, 1804.*

**T**O-day, my dear friend, I shall conduct you round the country of Nismes, and make you acquainted with the scenery, as also with the soil, the productions, and methods of cultivating the land here. It is always interesting to be informed of the various modifications of this artificial and vegetable creation, under different latitudes, and in different climates : I flatter myself therefore, with no small presumption, that this letter will not be entirely undeserving your approbation.

The country of Nismes is the lowest part of a flat valley about three thousand toises broad, extending from north-east to south-west, and inclosed by two chains of hills running parallel. The latter, as well as the valley lying between, form the district of Nismes, or, as it is here called, *Taillable*.

The quality of the soil is variable. The northern range of hills, for example, is composed merely of a compact chalk stone, sand, and clay ; but the greatest anomalies are discoverable on examining the soil of the valley itself. The whole is watered by the Vistre, which appears to form the boundary between these too opposite districts. There are besides several small rivulets interspersed throughout.

The variety in the products of this country keep pace with that of its soil. While the hills are covered with vine and olive plantations, fig, granate, almond, and mulberry trees ; the valley itself presents the finest prospect of cornfields, vegetable gardens, and a number of luxuriant meadows. Thus Nismes resembles a vast and fruitful garden, which in spring affords every rural allurement.

The most considerable objects of the farmer's attention in the culture of grain, are the winter wheat, *Triticum hibernum*



*Aristis carens*, and some Polish and English wheat, *Triticum polonicum*, and *Triticum turgidum*.

If the winter be mild and damp, the seed strikes up very stoutly; but if a dry spring succeed, it flags and shoots up from a sudden heat into weak thin ears. It grows commonly to the height of three feet six inches and upwards, the ears being filled with plump grains.

The harvest generally commences here towards the fifteenth of June; though the sickle and scythe are both known here, yet the former is used only by the country people on the borders; and the latter by the inhabitants of the Cevennes, labouring as reapers. These people usually cut with them in nine hours (a day's work) from seven hundred and fifty to eight hundred square toises. The produce of the fields is estimated here upon an average from the best soil at nine to ten; from the middling at six to seven; and from the worst, at four to five grains. The cubic foot of wheat weighs about fifty-five pound ten ounces.

Thrashing is perfectly unknown here, as in all the southern parts of Europe. Instead of this practice the corn is immediately after cutting trodden out on the field by horses or mules, trained peculiarly for the purpose; which is performed with great expedition, even in violent heats, and perpetual North winds. Thirty-two horses or mules, twenty-four of which are always at work, may thus tread out thirty-two thousand pounds of grain, from which four per cent. must be deducted for labourer's wages, reckoning, however, no more than two men as necessary. The grain is besides winnowed merely against the wind without fanning, and then passed several times through a sieve in the usual manner.

In addition to wheat are also cultivated rye, barley, and oats. The rye is used as winter fodder for the sheep; the barley is employed as a green fodder for the horses; and the oats are cultivated for this purpose, and kept also for the winter.

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## LETTER XX.

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AGRICULTURAL REMARKS CONTINUED.—PASTURAGE.—ARTIFICIAL MEADOWS.—LUCERNE.—USE AND PRODUCE. ESPARCETTE.—USE AND PROFIT.—VEGETABLES.—PARTICULARS OF THEM.—FLOCKS.—REMARKS ON BREEDING.—THEIR PRODUCE AND WOOL.

Nismes, February, 1804.

AGRICULTURE, my dear friend, will be the subject of this letter, and particularly that branch of it called pasturage. Natural meadows are very rare here, but are amply supplied by



those of art, of which kind the lucerne and esparcette, or sain-foin, are the most cultivated.

All lucerne grounds are here cut five and even six times if the weather be any way favourable. The ordinary amount of a crop from a lucerne-meadow is about 1100—1150 lbs. of hay to a hundred square toises. This, however, is to be understood only of the five usual cuttings, the sixth being of course more considerable. It is very possible at the same time to have a much smaller produce when great heats in February are succeeded by hoar-frosts. What grows after the sixth harvest affords good winter fodder for the sheep. I must observe that the *Litta marginalis*, Fabr. as also the chrysalis of the *Coccinella septempunctata*, G. besides other well-known insects are here very dangerous enemies to the lucerne.

The produce of the esparcette, (*Hedysarum onobrychis*) is trifling, a hundred square toises yielding only 550—580 lbs. of hay. On the other hand the esparcette thrives in every soil, needs no manure, suffers little from drought, and improves the earth astonishingly. The real clover is, however, not cultivated here, the climate rendering it impossible.

The vegetables of this place are excellent, as you know, from the seeds that form so considerable a branch of trade in Nismes. All kitchen gardens or fields are watered by means of the Persian wheel, as it is called, from the *Vistre*, and have, therefore, even in the hottest summers, a very fresh and luxuriant vegetation. The principal vegetables here, some of which attain an extraordinary size and thickness, may be classed as follow:

The branched selery, which grows here above thirty inches high; cauliflowers, in many different species, which are kept through winter in the open air; the African gourd (*courge barbaresque*) which is often two hundred pounds weight\*; the melons, particularly the water-melon (*melon de Malthe*), which is extremely soft, and yet is kept till Easter; the artichoke, which may be had here the whole year, without being transplanted into beds; beans, peas, &c. cannot be cultivated to any considerable extent on account of the dry climate; and potatoes are also considered as a garden rarity.

With respect to the breeding of cattle, that of the sheep is the only one carried on in a manner to merit attention. In general there are few large flocks; the small ones are of course more numerous, which every owner feeds entirely with the produce of his meadows, without the aid of commons, &c. &c.

*Cucurbita citrullus*. Linn. is used, when mixed with grapes, as a sort of preserve.



The first sheep are said to have been brought here from Spain; but this aboriginal breed has been so degenerated by the yearly mixture with the sheep bought up in Provence and Auvergne, that it bears no longer any marks of its origin; notwithstanding the breed here may be regarded as one of the most distinguished in the south of France. The sheep are commonly three feet four inches long, and two feet two inches high; when alive they weigh mostly forty pounds and upwards.

The flocks here commonly spend the greatest part of the year, from the end of February to the beginning of December, in the open fields; in the hottest weather only, and when no shade is at hand, they are driven home. On the other hand, during winter, the sheep are kept regularly in sheds, which, towards the south, are perfectly open, admitting at the same time the north wind. However the winter pastures are always used daily, according as the weather will permit.—Salt is not given because it is too dear; but they endeavour to supply its place by stinking salmon, which surely can never be wholesome.

With regard to the wool, it does not possess Leonian fineness, yet it is generally of a very good quality. On account of its whiteness and softness it is particularly serviceable for the swan-skin manufactory, being commonly used for the wefts. The weight of an ordinary skin is estimated at five or six pounds.

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## LETTER XXI.

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POMOLOGICAL REMARKS.—THE MOST REMARKABLE FRUIT-TREES.—OLIVE-TREES, VARIOUS SPECIES; CULTURE, CROPS, TREATMENT, PRODUCE.—MULBERRY-TREES, DIFFERENT KINDS OF; CULTURE, PRODUCE.—BREEDING OF SILK-WORMS.—GENERAL REMARKS.

*Nismes, February, 1804.*

**I**T is impossible, my dear friend, for me to communicate to you any scientific remarks on forests, there being no appearance of a forest in the country of Nismes; but you will receive with this a few pomological hints, which may, perhaps, not be unimportant. I must, however, confess, that in the article of fruit they are very deficient: I shall, therefore, pass over their modes of culture, and proceed to the sorts that are most remarkable.

The first in rank is the fig-tree, which thrives most luxuriantly, and almost entirely without any aid of art. Then the almond-tree, that grows best in the driest soils, running up in some measure wild, even in the fragments of chalk-tone. The jujub-tree (jujubier), the small medlar (azerolier), the service-tree



(alizer), and the granate, which are planted particularly in the vineyards, and the latter of which is used for forming hedges. The cherry, plum, pear, apricot, peach, and quince trees, generally yield but little fruit, on account of their premature blossom, yet the little that is produced is very excellent, and has a particularly rich odour.

I must however observe, that for some time past attempts have been made, and with success, to naturalize the pistachio-tree; but the date, which blossoms plentifully in the open air, never sets for fruit; and many other African and West Indian plants require to be protected from the north wind in order to thrive.

I now come to the olive, the culture of which is of such immense importance in the southern parts of Europe. This tree thrives best here when sheltered altogether from the north wind and its withering influence; it is the same if it stands in a ferruginous chalk soil. In cultivating the olive it is necessary to observe, that it is planted in the vineyards, betwixt the ploughed grounds, or in places marked out for the purpose; in which case, they are the trees always arranged in a quincunx order; and rye, or any green herb for provender, is usually grown between them.

The olive harvest commences with the month of November, sometimes even before the fruit is perfectly ripe, and lasts till the end of December. All are gathered at first promiscuously, which is not improper; but their method of proceeding afterwards is very objectionable. Thus, for instance, the unripe fruit, gathered so early as August, is mixed with that plucked later in the season. The olives are left to ferment in a heap before they are put into the press, and both before and after the pressing there is a total disregard to cleanliness. However the olives here, when carefully managed, yield a very good oil, which, though not so fine as that of Aix, is still fatter, and keeps good for a considerable length of time. With the *vichelines*, as they are called, or what is prepared for fining or clarifying the oil, they are more careful. For this purpose alkaline lees are used, which must, however, be sharpened with an addition of chalk. An olive-tree that has retained its lower branches, and is twenty feet high, and thirteen or fourteen toises in circumference, may, in good years, yield about two cubic feet and a half of fruit, from which seventeen or eighteen pounds of oil may be got, at fifteen sous a pound. But, unfortunately, such a season is rare, as the olive-tree has to stand not only the winter colds, but the summer mists and heats, particularly from the month of June to August, which often prove fatal to a whole crop.

I shall conclude with some remarks on the mulberry-tree,  
FISCHER.]



which is to be regarded as the main source of industry in this place. Round Nismes, and throughout Languedoc, it is usual to raise the black and white mulberry (*Morus alba* and *Morus nigra*), the former for its leaves, and the latter for its fruit. The first is distinguished again by the names of the *murier sauvageon*, the grand species, which is not abundant; and the *murier greffé*, which is obtained from the former by artificial means, and admits of innumerable modifications. The leaves of the *murier sauvageon* have the best taste and afford most nutriment; those of the *murier greffé* are distinguished by their size, stoutness, and number. The latter tree has, therefore, for ninety years maintained the preference.

The mulberry-trees here are extraordinarily beautiful, and afford in the spring, before they are robbed of their leaves, a very charming sight along the rich green fields. They are most productive in the twentieth year, and then last fifty or sixty years at least. A mulberry-tree of thirteen toises in circumference and five in height, may yield three hundred and fifty pounds of leaves yearly, a hundred weight of which fetches from twenty-five to thirty-five sous.

The frost appears to be of little prejudice to the mulberry-trees, although the most trifling hoar is injurious to the young buds. But from a very great heat succeeding a hard frost the trees suffer, as the leaves commonly become shrivelled, and all their essence is evaporated.

Much as the climate of Nismes favours the culture of the mulberry, it appears, however, to be by no means fitted for silkworms, particularly when compared with the Cevennes. Thus, for example, one ounce of nymphs yields, upon an average, only thirty pounds of cods, from which twelve drachms of silk at most are obtained to the pound. In the Cevennes, on the other hand, may reckon to the same quantity of nymphs fifty, nay sometimes a hundred drachms of silk, without the nourishment being better. For two thousand pounds of worms they take here as well as there, about the same quantity of leaves. Several causes have been assigned for this striking disproportion. In the first place, the air of Nismes is by no means so healthy as on the Cevennes. Secondly, the summer here is too hot, and the frequent south winds are injurious; but with a long-continued north wind the harvest will always prove more plentiful, particularly when it blows in spring, and towards the spinning-time. Thirdly, the repositories for the worms with the stands, are always fixed in the kitchens, which are never free from smoke and noxious vapours. Fourthly and lastly, the keepers, who never modify the methods they learned in the Cevennes, are too negligent and improvident in their management.



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 LETTER XXII.
 

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AGRICULTURAL REMARKS CONCLUDED.—CULTURE OF THE VINES.—VARIETY OF THE SOIL, AND ITS TREATMENT.—SORTS OF GRAPES.—VINTAGE.—BAD MANAGEMENT.—BRANDY DISTILLERIES.—SPIRITS OF WINE DISTILLERIES.

Nismes, Feb. 1804.

**T**O-day, my dear friend, we will mount the chalk-hills, whose acclivities are covered with vineyards. This is the last agreeable branch of agriculture which deserves our attention before we pass over to other subjects.

The soil of the hills destined for the cultivation of the vines may be either chalk or gravel, each of which requires a distinct treatment.

The vines are propagated by layers without joints and roots, which are laid into the rills made for the purpose, without any previous preparation, in a careless manner. Notwithstanding this simple method, as well as the bad soil, and the parching climate, the plants grow well merely by the aid of the nocturnal dews and the fresh sea-breezes above described. With only a moderate soil they often rise nine feet and upwards. Manuring is never thought of, nor are props required. There are about thirty different sorts of grapes, of which the *spiran verdaou* is the best; among the white, the *muscat Grec* is distinguished for its fragrance and durability; and among the red, the *spiran* is greatly sought after by epicures.

The vintage generally commences in the middle of October, without regard to the different degrees of forwardness of the fruit, and still less to a separation of the different sorts. The press used here is what is termed a spindle-press, and is very bad; and the whole management of the must, &c. is such as would perfectly vex a Rhemish vintner. It is remarkable, at the same time, that the wine is here left to ferment in large vats, and in good years they also serve in the place of casks, by laying sand, earth, or lees six inches thick on the wooden cover, or even inclosing them with brick and mortar.

The produce of a vineyard here is as various as the quality

of the wine. A hundred square toises planted with one hundred and seventy stocks, often yield from a bad soil only forty pints, from a good soil not unfrequently three hundred; yet there is a medium between these two extremes. Wine from a gravelly soil or a granite sand, is more spirited than that which comes from a chalk land. Vineyards with clay or lime soil yield of course only bad wine. From this, as well as from any superfluous quantity of the better sort, brandy is distilled, which is here the occupation of the country people, who set about it, however, in no very skilful manner.

Yet one hundred pints of the worst wine usually yield forty-six pints of the strongest brandy, and occasionally more when the wine is grown in a gravelly soil. In the village of Aiguevives the brandy-distillery has been established for fifteen years with such success, that three thousand casks have been sold yearly at fifteen hundred franks a cask.

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### LETTER XXIII.

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NATURAL HISTORY.—VIEW OF THE COUNTRY IN GEOGNOSTIC AND ORYCHTOGNOSTIC RESPECTS.—THE NORTHERN CHALK HILLS.—THE SOUTHERN CHALK HILLS.—THE PLAIN OR VALLEY.—BOTANICAL, ZOOLOGICAL, AND ORNITHOLOGICAL REMARKS, &c.

*Nismes, Feb. 1804.*

MY last letter from Nismes will, I hope, afford my very dear friend no less amusement while reading on his favourite subject of natural history. Though it will scarcely add much to his ample stock of knowledge, he will find some pleasure in being able to judge of the accuracy of the remarks.

The geognostic view of the country leads us every where to observe traces of its having been in early periods covered with the sea. The chalk-hills filled with muscle beds, petrifications, and sea-weeds, &c.: the low situation, the layers of earth, the salt springs of the vale itself; finally, the morasses, sloughs, and ponds at the passage out of the same along the coast, all contribute to support this conjecture.

When examining the two ranges of hills that encompass the valley in an oryctognostic respect, we find a visible difference between the southern and northern chalk-hills. The northern are composed merely of chalk-stone, and have the aspect of the first ridge in the great mass of the Cevennes. The chief of them contain monstrous crystal spars, which are often many toises high, and of a rhomboidal form. Veins of quarry,



marble-stone, beds of ammonites, nautilites, belemnites, echinities, petrified fish-bones, &c. are to be found there in abundance. The lower rows contain layers of mountain flour (*farina fossilis*) resembling the finest powder. Whole stems of trees, and particularly of the larch, are not unfrequently to be met with, especially in layers of clay.

The southern range of hills exhibits materials and compositions very different from those of the northern. It consists merely of Alpine stony substances, and volcanic ingredients. There are irregular layers of quartz, gravel, jasper, spar, slate, marble, granite variolite, chalk-stones with the impressions of organic bodies, turf, petrified pieces of wood, hard and porous lava, basalt, &c. mixed together without order or connection; at the same time it is necessary to observe, that this row of hills is much lower than that to the north.

Thirdly, the vale lying between also affords innumerable proofs in corroboration of this hypothesis. The half-petrified muscles, chamites, tellinites, &c. which are often found in whole beds; abundance of alkaline plants, salt springs, saline crystallisations, &c. all denote that it had formerly been the bottom of the sea, and prove that this was a vale in the gulf of Lyons.

The botanic department next claims our attention in this quarter. Hill and dale are equally enriched by the gifts of vegetable nature, whose variety is no less remarkable than their abundance. The ornithologist will be no less entertained in the surrounding country of Nismes, than the botanist. A fertile vale in the neighbourhood of the Cevennes, and the sea, as well as the vast number of ponds and marshes, must naturally attract a considerable variety of the feathered tribe. In the summer and in the breeding-time they absent themselves, partly on account of the excessive heat, and partly for want of water; but in the winter they return in vast crowds, with a treble number of other birds of passage. I present you with a complete list of the abovementioned, adding only a few remarks on some particular species.

Birds of prey are here very little known, and are mostly classed quite erroneously, so as often to make two distinct species of male and female. In general the large are called *russos*, and the small *monisse*. Quails pass this way in great flocks; some, however, winter and have their young here, so that young quails are to be met with by the fifteenth of May. The nightingale often warbles here till the middle of August: in the cage it is fed with the nymphs of the silk-worm, which have been dried in the ovens. The lark remains only till spring; it is a rare case to see one in summer. The water-fowl is here so plentiful, that with ordinary sporting success you may kill from fifteen to eighteen hundred.

The entomologist is the third and last person who will profit in his observations on the country of Nismes. In fact, it contains many insects which, according to the usual designation, are esteemed foreign. The scorpion and tarantula are here very abundant, but by no means noxious; the *chermes* (*Coccus ilicis*) has very much diminished since the frequent extirpation of the trees; in consequence of which this considerable branch of trade has been almost ruined.

I must now, my dear friend, conclude my remarks on a town which is unquestionably one of the most interesting in France, and deserves the attention of every traveller. The day after tomorrow I shall go to Montpellier; and whatever I may collect sufficiently interesting for a letter in similar topographical, mercantile, historical, and other details, you may rely on my communicating it to you immediately.

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## LETTER XXIV.

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DEPARTURE FROM NISMES.—PASSAGE TO MONTPELLIER.—COMPANY AND OTHER PARTICULARS.—INCIDENT IN THE DILIGENCE, AND OTHER LUDICROUS SCENES.—LUNEL WINE AND ITS QUALITIES.—COUNTRY.—ARRIVAL AT MONTPELLIER.—FIRST IMPRESSION.

*Montpellier, March, 1804.*

YOU now receive the first letter from this French hospital. To be sure, there are no dead men's bones bleaching in the market, nor have the inns medical names, as our amiable Thummel humorously relates; but it is certainly true that we immediately perceive here a chemical pharmacopeiacal bustle, and that the whole town smells like a great apothecary's shop. Yet before I enlarge on these and other particulars, I must say a few words of my journey hither.

We departed at five in the morning, the remaining four places in the diligence being occupied by two gentlemen and their ladies. The sun soon rose, and the day became as warm and agreeable as if it were in the middle of May. The larks sang, the butterflies fluttered past the carriage; fields and meadows, trees and hedges, shone in full splendour. Thus we fled light and merrily over the charming plain, while a number of large villages—desert masses of stone encompassed with walls, passed before our eyes in quick succession to the right and left.

Half a league before we reached Lunel, the road, however, became all at once bad, and we proceeded with considerable difficulty. The horses suddenly sunk into a hole, the diligence



was overturned, and we fell over one another. After some exclamations, we made shift to get up, and creep out of the coach window one after another in the drollest manner imaginable.

There we now stood in the middle of the mud, which reached up to our knees, looking wistfully at the firm ground opposite to us ten or twelve paces distant. We finally resolved on taking the ladies up between us, and wading on at all events till we gained a solid footing. The agreeable office we had to perform made us forget our own situation, and enabled us to reach the dry land with facility and convenience. We then sent some lusty peasants to the assistance of the poor postillion, and hastened with genuine French vivacity into Lunel, to a very good dinner and a few bottles of the best muscadine. We very soon forgot the little misadventure, and were extremely well pleased to find, when the diligence arrived, that nothing was broken.

Lunel is a place that bears the marks of considerable opulence. We are gratified with the sight of pretty houses, neat gardens, large magazines, and even a small canal, on which the wine-barges go to Cette. But, if a bottle of genuine old Lunel of the first quality even here costs three livres, what sort of goods can be consigned to Germany at the usual prices, and what a miserable compound must be sold for this wine! Agreeable and strengthening as it may be, it is notwithstanding very treacherous, spirited, and desiccating.

Beyond Lunel the country grows more and more chearful; but it is the most cultivated in the neighbourhood of Montpellier itself, where the eye is caught with a number of pretty country-houses. It is, however, very deficient in necessary shade; nay, in fact, it appears rather agreeable and pretty, than beautiful and picturesque, if I except some knots of woods on the Lez, near the small village of Castelnau.

Thus we reach at length the gate of Montpellier, and immediately enter into the narrow dirty suburbs. But the road soon begins again to improve: a beautiful row of houses, with terrace gardens, is seen on the right hand, and on the left a broad esplanade laid out into avenues of trees. The impression they produce is very pleasing, especially when beheld by moon-light.

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 LETTER XXV.
 

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CLIMATE OF MONTPELLIER IN GENERAL.--TEMPERATURE, AND ITS RELATIONS.—STATE OF THE BAROMETER.—PREVALENT WINDS.—VARIATIONS, AND A NUMBER OF RAINY DAYS, &c.—PARTICULARS.—WHOLESOMENESS OF THE AIR, AND GENERAL REMARKS ON PATIENTS TRAVELLING THITHER.

*Montpellier, March, 1804.*

YOU congratulate me on being in this heavenly climate ; you tell me that the doctor will send all his hypochondriacs hither, and more especially persons labouring under pectoral diseases. But I must sincerely confess that the climate here has nothing celestial in it ; and in my mind is very ill suited for the hypochondriac, and still less favourable for pectoral disorders ; it resembles that of Nismes but too much in its variations and extremes.

The temperature here has neither uniform gradation, nor positive order. The summers are hot almost to suffocation, the thermometer keeping at between 25 and 30 degrees : the winters, on the contrary, are severely cold, the thermometer often falling to 4 or 5 degrees, not unfrequently to 6 or 7, and sometimes even to 8 or 10. The spring is extremely short ; for commonly the all-consuming heat commences with the early part of April ; the autumn is agreeable, yet, in the vale, always rainy. But in all seasons the climate is so changeable, that the difference often amounts to 10 or 12 degrees in four and twenty hours, and accordingly we may have charming May days in winter, and autumn nights in the middle of summer. But the state of the barometer appears to be much more uniform, as its middle height in winter is 27 inches 11 lines ; in the summer 28 inches ; and betwixt the lowest state of 27 inches 1 line, and the highest of 28 inches 8 lines, no striking and sudden transition is usually perceivable.

The boasted serenity of the sky and the purity of the atmosphere here, even during the winter, come just in this season only from the prevailing north, also north-north-east winds, but which are on that account so much the colder and more cutting. When these abate, the damp relaxing south and south-east winds begin to blow, and bring with them, as at Nismes, clouds



and vapours. The east and north-east winds are attended with abundance of rain: only the north-west wind, the zephyr of Montpellier, brings mild and chearful weather. But the boisterous west-north-west is here very little felt. The winds mostly prevalent at Montpellier are those which blow from different directions; and vary much in their violence at the end of March and the beginning of April. The *cavaliers* are mostly perceived at the end of April and the beginning of May; and, finally, a sort of *garbin*, or south wind, here termed *le paresseux*, which resembles that of Nismes.

The scarcity of rain at Montpellier appears to be no less exaggerated than its temperature, as the number of rainy days is computed to be at the utmost twenty-three in the course of the year. But it has lately been proved by six and thirty years' observation, that there are every year at least forty whole days, and as many half days, in which it rains. The quantity of rain is at the same time, according to a moderate calculation, 28 inches 3 lines; of which almost the half is to be reckoned for the months of October and November.

Mists are extremely rare; there is also upon the whole but little snow to be seen. There have been winters however, as in 1789, where it lay with a hard frost for six days; or in 1799, where it remained almost eleven. Hail, on the other hand, very seldom falls, and even then never but in small quantities. There are also at the utmost not more than six or eight thunder storms yearly, which pass over in the neighbourhood of the sea, mostly with great rapidity, and almost always without doing any injury.

The salubrity of the air here in general is what I will not by any means dispute. I do not deny that there are very many old persons: I even grant that one out of fifteen or sixteen persons may always be seventy or eighty years old, although the mean age for the female sex may be estimated at only twenty-four, and for the males at twenty-eight. But from all this we are not to conclude that the climate of Montpellier is exactly adapted to persons troubled with hypochondriacal or pectoral disorders.

No, certainly not, my dear friend; for the influence of those cold cutting north-winds, those damp warm relaxing *marins*, those incessant variations of temperature, require no farther investigation, and it has been proved that a great many patients of that description have not only grown worse at Montpellier, but that a number of travellers, particularly English, have been victims to their stay there. I am, however, not speaking of physicians; I have merely to do with the climate: the former are out of my sphere; but the latter has been the subject of my own experience and that of others. Yet I will forbear any further remarks, for fear I should fall into the error of repetition.

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 LETTER XXVI.
 

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MONTPELLIER.—SITUATION AND ASTRONOMICAL POSITION.—TOPOGRAPHICAL RELATIONS.—TOWN AND SUBURBS.—POPULATION AND ADVANTAGES.—DOMESTIC ECONOMY.—INNS AND BOARDING-HOUSES.—PROVISIONS.—SOCIAL RELATIONS.—THEATRE.—CLUBS.—LIBRARIES.—WALKS IN THE TOWN.—THE PEYROU.—THE ESPLANADE.—THE BOTANIC GARDEN.—COUNTRY EXCURSIONS.

*Montpellier, March, 1804.*

**M**ONTPELLIER is situated in 43° 36' 25" N. lat. and 1° 32' 45" E. long. of Paris; it extends down the connected declivities of a hill, the broadest side of which lies south-east, and contains a mine of quick-silver. It constitutes a point of the great chain that forms a sort of bason, and closes in the form of terraces to the Cevennes. The town itself presents, with few exceptions, nothing but a labyrinth of narrow, steep, angular, and dirty alleys; it is, however, not totally devoid of fine edifices. The suburbs, on the contrary, have mostly broad and regular streets, and give the whole a not unfavourable appearance. The town and suburbs together are estimated at 1800 *metres* from north to south; at 2000 from east to west, and the elevation of the highest point over the surface of the sea at 29, 25 *metres*. There are no public buildings worthy of particular notice; but the façades of some churches in the suburbs de la Saunerie and Dominique must not be passed over. The splendid, and perhaps too massive structure of the Peyrou will be spoken of in another place.

The latest calculations fix the population of Montpellier at thirty-two thousand: the garrison, however, appears to be included in the number. Montpellier is the chief place in the department de l'Herault, and of course the seat of the civil and military administration; at the same time being the central point of trade and industry for all Lower Languedoc, it is very lively and crowded.

It has, however, one disadvantage resulting from its magnitude and situation common to most great places, namely, that living is by no means reasonable. At a good inn the daily charges



for board and lodging may be reckoned at about ten or twelve livres. Persons desirous of engaging with a family, can find none to take them under four guineas per month; and there are some who demand from six to fifteen. When we take rooms only in a lodging-house, it costs twenty livres a month, and the meals at a tavern from thirty-five to forty.

But if provisions are dear, they are very excellent and plentiful. Fish, fowl, and fruit, even from Spain by Cette, are to be had in abundance. The wine is very good, and the very best sorts may be bought at a moderate rate. The water is, generally speaking, not bad, but it is advisable, however, to keep to the *eau de St. Clement*, as it is termed, which comes from the Fontaine du Peyrou. But to those also who will not leave the delicacies peculiar to Montpellier untasted, the *patés de rougets*, the *dragées* and *pastilles à la rose* and *à la vanille*, the *crème de Moka* and *huile de rose (liqueurs)*; and, finally, the *raisiné marmelade* of grapes, are above all to be recommended; the latter is at the same time an excellent solvent.

Whoever wants clothes, may be provided with the well-known Languedoc clothes, or other manufactures, at tolerably reasonable prices. Woollen manufactures, such as blankets, flannels, &c. appear to be by no means dear. But firing in Montpellier is a shocking article; the wood being brought here as far as one or two leagues, and no coals burnt in the fire-places; a last of oak (four hundred pounds), frequently fetches from fifteen to eighteen livres; a last of olive ten or twelve, and other lighter sorts in proportion.

With regard to society, Montpellier cannot boast any extraordinary resources. It has a theatre, which cannot be placed above the middle rank; and two CLUBS for reading, balls, concerts, &c. to which the stranger can gain admittance by a liberal payment: he may profit by the library of the central school, and, besides that, meet with a tolerably good circulating library at Durville's.

A lover of walking will find ample amusement in the Peyrou, and the esplanade in the botanic garden, and the country round Montpellier. The Peyrou is a very fine large terrace on the level point of the hill on the side of which Montpellier is built. The prospect is excellent, from the command of the sea, the east Pyrennees, the Cevennes, and the Alps: the whole exhibits something grand and majestic, which is not easy to be clothed in language. It is only to be regretted that this walk, as well as both the lower side-terraces, is totally void of shade, and so perfectly exposed, that with the north-wind it is rendered quite unpleasant. The water-temple and the adjoining aqueduct in Roman taste, demand every regard; though the former has,



however, been very much damaged during the revolution, and the latter is beyond all proportion too splendid for the conveyance of so small a mass of water.

As the Peyrou is situated on the most elevated point of the hill, the esplanade occupies the most depressed part of the declivity, forming a difference of at least fifteen metres in the level. This esplanade lies between the town and the fortress, and being planted with many rows of lofty shady trees, has the peculiar advantage of affording protection from the north wind to such as frequent its walks. Along one side runs a beautiful row of houses, with their gardens and terraces; and on the other is a beautiful prospect of the sea at a distance over the country of Montpellier. As this walk lies completely open to the south, it is the proper winter promenade of Montpellier.

A third walk in the town is the botanic garden, or rather the middle part of it. It is unfortunate that the ground is too unequal, and the whole out of repair. There are, however, hopes that, with the restoration of the garden itself, of which mention will be made in the sequel, this agreeable promenade will also undergo some improvements.

The country round Montpellier abounds in walks, but they are wretchedly deficient in shade. One of the prettiest and most shady among them is the road to Castelnau, half an hour's walk from the town, and up the banks of the Lez. Whoever wishes to extend his excursions on horseback will be gratified by visiting the country-houses of *Montferrier*, *la Piscine*, *Clos de St. Martial*, *Chateau d' Eau Bionne*, &c. but particularly *la Verune*, with its charming gardens, now the property of *Madame Brunette*. A still farther tour may be advantageously made into the neighbourhood of *Cette*, *Maguelonne*, and even the *Cevennes*, which I shall have occasion to mention more particularly elsewhere.

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## LETTER XXVII.

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INDUSTRY.—CALCULATION OF DIFFERENT MANUFACTURES, WITH CURSORY REMARKS.—TRADE OF MONTPELLIER.—ITS DIVISION.—STATISTICAL AND MERCANTILE OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRINCIPAL MANUFACTURING AND TRADING PLACES IN THE DEPARTMENT.

*Montpellier, March, 1804.*

I WILL not delay satisfying your repeated wishes to know the state of trade in Montpellier as far as lies in my power; but I will not flatter you or myself with my account being complete, as such affairs are conducted here with a great deal of



closeness and mystery. There is, however, still sufficient known for an attentive observer to render a letter new and interesting.

Beginning with the industrious classes, we are led to consider the flannel-printers and blanket-manufacturers. The former print what they receive from the departments of the Lozère and Upper Garonne. The latter manufacture the wool produced in these departments: of the first description there are three, and of the second ten. We find five cotton-weavers, particularly for handkerchiefs; three Turkish yarn-dyers, to whom Rouen and Vau, as well as Cholet, &c. send their yarn; five tanners, who use the double strong peel from the bark of the *quercus coccifera*. Three distilleries for vitriol, tartar, and aqua-fortis, each of which manufactures the articles above mentioned.

Besides these, are fourteen large perfumeries and liqueur-distilleries; eleven wine-coopers for the methodical clarification and management of wine; nine brandy-distilleries, which are in like manner carried on by a regular process; and also three manufactories for the purification and crystallization of verdigrease. The raw verdigrease manufactories, which supply the former, constitute here a branch of domestic industry, being mostly the occupation and concern of the women. The simple process of making this article with copper-plates and wine-lees, is a circumstance with which you are too well acquainted to need farther illustration. We will therefore proceed to the commercial department.

The exports and imports which form the trade of Montpellier, are among the first objects that deserve our attention; but it is necessary to distinguish between the town itself and the country of Lower Languedoc. The town of Montpellier exports all the abovementioned products of its own industry, and likewise the staple commodities or manufactures of Languedoc, such as corn, wool, oil, wine, silk, and brandy. It imports for its own consumption, as well as that of the country around, Northern, Levantic, West India, and even some Spanish productions, as esparto, cork, &c.

The course of trade in Montpellier generally proceeded by two routs: all merchandizes destined for foreign parts or the southern French ports, are conveyed by Cette; and all to be sent for the rest of France, by Agde. In like manner the foreign imports arrive at Cette, and the inland at Agde. Cette keeps up a brisk coasting trade with the neighbouring ports, and a considerable intercourse with Hamburgh, Bremen, Copenhagen, &c. From Agde, at the entrance of the great canal, goods are sent by Toulouse and Bourdeaux through all France, and by the same channel are transported the returns for Montpellier. Besides,



the inferior communications of the department are kept up by numberless carts, mules, &c.

The commerce in this place is far from being contemptible, although it has experienced, in common with all French trading towns, the grievous effects of that revolution which agonized the whole country. It can boast a considerable number of rich and respectable houses, that maintain a correspondence with the principal commercial cities in Europe, and are not unfrequently their agents. Many of them extend their speculations even to foreign loans, West India plantations, or great inland enterprises in building, &c.

I shall conclude my letter with some short statistico-mercantile remarks on the principal manufacturing and trading places in the department.

Lodève, a place famous for its mechanical inventions, has seven thousand nine hundred inhabitants. It contains manufactories of stockings, wax-lights, hats, tartar, neckhandkerchiefs, paper, soap, verdigrease and brandy; besides several glass-houses. Clermont l'Herault contains four thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight inhabitants, and a number of clothiers and tanners. Gignac, with two thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven inhabitants, carries on a considerable trade in wine, corn, brandy, verdigrease, oil, and particularly preserved olives.—Ganges, with three thousand five hundred inhabitants, is intitled to notice, both on account of its silk stockings and its excellent sheep.—Meze has two thousand one hundred inhabitants, and extensive brandy-distilleries.—Beziers twelve thousand five hundred and one inhabitants, famous on account of its fine Indian cloth and stocking manufactories, essences, wines and brandies.—Vezenas, with seven thousand two hundred and forty-nine inhabitants, carries on a considerable trade in corn, wine, oil, leather, silk merchandizes, and excellent vegetables; and has also a very crowded fair, that is the central point for the whole trading community of Languedoc.—Bedarieux, with one thousand three hundred and seventy inhabitants, deserves mention for its important manufactories of cloths, hats, and stockings.—St. Pons, with four thousand four hundred and seventy-five, for its fine and coarse stuffs, wool and cotton-spinning.—St. Chinian, with one thousand five hundred, has perhaps the best cloth-manufactures in all Languedoc, &c.—Cette, Frontignan, &c. will be noticed hereafter.



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## LETTER XXVIII.

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LITERARY RELATIONS OF MONTPELLIER.—FORMER UNIVERSITY.—PRESENT SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.—ITS SITUATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT.—PROFESSORS.—OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.—PUBLIC LIBRARIES.—PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS.—LEARNED SOCIETIES.—BOOKSELLERS.—PRINTING OFFICES.—REMARKS.

Montpellier, March, 1804.

AT length I am enabled to communicate to you some authentic information relative to the literary relations of Montpellier; particularly concerning the changes, and, I may say, improvements, which they have undergone since the revolution.

You remember that Montpellier formerly possessed a university consisting of three faculties; theological, juridical, and medical: you also know that there was here a particular surgical school erected by the meritorious Peyronnie. This university has been dissolved; the medicinal faculty and the surgical school blended into one, and from thence a new institution formed, under the title of *école special de médecine*, with many celebrated men for teachers, and above a hundred students.

This institution is indebted for its present organization, and probably, for its rising credit, to the minister Chaptal, formerly professor of chemistry at Montpellier. He has transplanted it from its former circumscribed situation into the large episcopal palace, and has erected an anatomical theatre, as well as a chemical laboratory, which are constructed with no less taste than convenience. He has besides granted considerable sums for the enlargement of the library, and the restoration of the botanic garden, &c.

The professors appointed for the medicinal school, are, for the greater part, famous in their line as physicians, or as medical writers, particularly Messrs. René, Barthez, Dumas, Gouan, Baumes, Fouget, and Broussonet, whose merits are admitted by every impartial physician, even should he question the excellence of the Montpellier climate; many of the adjuncts are also esteemed very skilful, among whom Messrs. Broussonet, jun. Megean, and Draparnaud, hold a distinguished rank.

The other seminaries in Montpellier consist of a central school



in the Jesuit's college, which is now to be converted into a Lyceum, and nine secondary schools, which also admit boarders. Among the public libraries that of the *école de médecine*, and of the central school, claim the first attention. The periodical works which are published here are, the *Annales de Médecine* and the *Journal du Département de l'Herault*. The former is edited by the very meritorious Dr. Baumes, who directs his attention to foreign literature, particularly English and Italian; the editor of the latter is a M. Paris, who also publishes a yearly almanac for the department: it stands upon a level with any French weekly production of the kind.

Of learned societies there is first, *Société de Médecine*, of which Dr. Baumes is the president, under whose inspection the abovementioned journal appears; secondly, *Société Libre des Sciences et Belles Lettres*, which manifests, at least, very much zeal; thirdly and lastly, *Société Libre d'Agriculture*, of which a second division exists at Gignac. Montpellier reckons besides six booksellers, and eight printing-offices, which is more than double the number of what existed during the revolution.

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## LETTER XXIX.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INHABITANTS OF MONTPELLIER, IN GENERAL AND IN PARTICULAR.—POPULAR FESTIVALS, &c.

**I** AM now come to the most interesting part of my observations on the moral economy of Montpellier. I shall endeavour to give you a general and particular sketch of the inhabitants, with the addition of some remarks on the popular festivals.

The general character of the inhabitants appears to me to be a perfectly singular mixture of Jewish, Christian, French, and English spirit. So at least I have endeavoured to explain, on the one hand, that love of gain and bigotry; on the other, that petulance and roughness. In buying and selling they are of the Hebrew tribe; in believing and thinking, fanatics: hasty, forward, and restless as the French; and yet rude, uncouth, and unsociable as the English. Here you have, summed up in a few words, the characteristics of the Montpelliard. Universal report and many concurrent proverbs, will, at least in some measure, serve to screen me from the charge of partiality.

One proverb, for example, says, "pound seven Jews in a mortar, and the juice that is pressed from them will make a single Montpelliard;" a second, to denote his bigotry, "he turns up his eyes like a saint of Montpellier;" a third proverb, speaking of their irritability, declares the men of Montpellier to be like



sparrows, and the women like blackbirds. Finally, their egoistic niggardly unsociableness is designated by the saying, "Whoever does not wish to keep a person to dinner, invites him, as in Montpellier, on the stairs, or at the house-door," &c.

In regard to these fundamental traits, there are some small modifications, from the difference of rank and sex. Thus, the higher classes are by no means so fanatic and brutal as the common people; the women distinguishing themselves in the former case more by prudery, and in the latter more by boldness; but upon the whole, the same general tone prevails. That, however, there are at the same time in Montpellier very estimable individuals, and even excellent men, is what no man would venture to deny, who had ever made remarks on variety of characters.

The two most remarkable popular festivals, and which survived the revolution, are the two solemn processions, or rather ballets, called *las Treijas* and *lou Chivalet*. As I cannot however speak of them as an eye-witness, we will give a relation of them in the words of Mr. Fisch, though upon the whole, he is inclined to illustrate rather more than is consistent with accuracy. He begins first with the *Treijas*.

"The propensity for dancing is so universal among the lowe classes, that there is not a guild which has not every year its *fes ive* day, celebrated by dancing and music. Thus I have seen the stocking-weavers, coopers, gardeners, and other companies, commemorate their anniversaries with dancing through the town. Nay, even the porters have such an honorary day, on which they are accustomed to go through the awkward movements peculiar to their guild before the houses of their customers. The stocking-weavers carried on a stage, adorned with flowers and ribands, a wooden weaver's chair, on which a boy appeared to be working. The gardeners had a tub with a pole in it, from whence, instead of branches, hung a number of flower-garlands. The coopers carried half hoops, which were also decorated with ribands and wreaths. All had learned very pretty dances, and made such masterly turns with their ringlets of flowers or hoops, and disengaged themselves again with so much dexterity and order, that I could not help admiring their art.

"But what engaged my attention the most was, the extraordinary vanity of these people, which manifested itself on these solemnities under the most varied forms, and occasions a number of ridiculous scenes. Poverty allows only a few of them to put on decent cloathing: but with all the indigence and dirt that is evident from their dress, they all wear white silk stockings, which are quite covered with feathers of all colours, and a threadbare scarf from the wardrobe of the theatre, and some other showy tatters from the rag-shop. The females are commoply worse



dressed, and yet have fashionable ladies' hats, which they mostly borrow or beg from the houses where they serve milk or vegetables. These head-dresses form a singular contrast with the brown and coarse faces which they shade. Many a girl appears also, for want of a female head-dress, in a man's hat, on which is stuck a number of shabby feathers.

"The porters also adorn their hats on these days with ostrich feathers, and bind a scarf with gold or silver tassels, round their bodies. The most favourite dress among these people is that of an officer. In all their processions there are some who prance about in a soldier's coat, with a stick, sword, and epaulets; all hired from the theatre. The gold epaulet has above all things so many charms for them, that many a one attaches it to his dirty clothes, who has not the money to pay for its hire. An indispensable article in all these festivals are the flags, of which I saw a great number of various colours, decorated with inscriptions and paintings. Twelve porters had with their dance as many different colours, of which some, to judge by the dirt, might have already served their great-grand-fathers.

"All these festival days are very prejudicial to the young people, and commonly still more so for the poor, but just as vain, parents, who often pawn their beds and clothes in order to show off their children upon these occasions. I was assured that there are never so many silver crucifixes, inherited from their mothers, so many wretched articles of household furniture and wearing apparel, lying at the pawn-brokers, as in the months of April and May, the season for these festivals.

"Another popular festival pleased me still more, because it awakens less gloomy associations, and announces on the first glance, an important event for Montpellier. This festival is called the "DANCE OF THE LITTLE HORSE" (*la danse du chevalet*, in the *patois* "*lou chivalet*") which is usually kept in autumn by the youths of the best families, and consequently can be attended with none of the ill consequences accompanying the former festival. This year they all wore blue silk breeches and white silk stockings; their white shirts were bound with ribbands on the arms, and round the body with blue silk scarfs. On their hats they had white plumes, the favourite ornament of the nation. The leaders were also in officer's uniforms. In this procession the dancers of the *chevalet* proceeded in great numbers two and two through the streets, dancing to fine Turkish music, in the open places and before the houses of the chief magistrates.

"One of the youths had a little horse of pasteboard, of the size of a foal, bound to his body, so that he looked like a horseman mounted: a silk cloth covered the legs of the centaur. Another youth carried a *tambour de baske*, filled with oats, as fodder for



the horse, which, when offered him, he rejected by dancing away from it. In the mean time the remainder of the company danced with various evolutions round the two chief persons, and appeared to give way, by alternate positions, one time to the little horse, and another to its importunate benefactor, until at length the capricious animal was so inclosed, as to be obliged to stand still before the proffered corn. This dance has something very pleasing in it, and was executed with great dexterity.

“ I suspected that it was originally intended to designate something real, but could obtain no satisfactory information. Every person whom I asked, gave me a contradictory account. The dancers themselves were by no means instructed in what they were to represent. All, however, concurred in saying, that it had been handed down for ages, from one generation to another, and had retained, by means of tradition, its original form. I found at length, in the history of the town of Montpellier, which a certain canonicus d'Egrefeuille has written, in two folio volumes, and particularly in the French Mercury of October 1721, the desired information, in a very pretty anecdote which I will communicate in a brief manner.

“ William, the last hereditary lord of Montpellier, left by his wife Eudosia, daughter of the Grecian emperor Emanuel Comenus, an only legitimate heiress, who after being twice a widow, was married to Peter the second, king of Arragon. But her new husband having no great attachment to her, left her at Montpellier, and absented himself entirely from her company. The inhabitants of Montpellier, who loved their lady extremely, and would willingly have had an heir of the Arragonian states among them, were no less affected by this neglect than the queen herself. The king was once led by business to Montpellier, where he fell in love with a beautiful widow at the court of his spouse, and made her many offers, which were all rejected. The consuls of the town, animated by a love for their good queen, ventured to deceive their lord, by persuading the beautiful widow to make an assignation with him in her bed-chamber, and inducing the queen to occupy the bed that was destined to illicit gratification.

“ The king, who was to go in the dark, did not perceive the deception before morning, when the consuls, who had spent the whole night praying in the church, crowded with torches into the bed-chamber, and throwing themselves at his feet, entreated pardon for the well-meant fraud. He laughed himself at the pious zeal of these good people, and pardoned their bold enterprize. The following day he went to the chace accompanied by his spouse, and returning to the town in the evening, with the queen sitting with him on his horse, the inhabitants, who were in



the mean time informed of it, ran from all quarters, dancing for joy round the horse which carried the royal pair, and lead it in triumph round the town. The queen was afterwards delivered of a son, who; under the name of James the Conqueror, enlarged the dominions of his father. When this prince visited Montpellier in the year 1239, the inhabitants represented, among other testimonies of joy, the entry of his royal parents on horse-back, and repeated the same dance to which their festivities had given rise thirty-three years before. King James, moved by this simple expression of his subjects' affection, commanded the memorial of an event so nearly relating to himself, to be transmitted to the latest posterity, by the yearly repetition of the same festive dance."

I shall conclude this letter with some remarks on the Languedoc *patois*, avoiding at the same time all quotations, however favourable the opportunity for displaying learning may be. Whoever studies the dialect of Languedoc will perceive, that it is composed from an original national language and many foreign idioms. You will remember that ancient Gaul was first conquered by the Romans; next by the Goths; then by the Arabians; and lastly, by the French. This will very easily account for the mixture of Celtic, Latin, Gothic, Arabic, and French words, which compose this dialect.

But, as the Romans were the most cultivated, and as they ruled these provinces the longest, the Languedoc tongue resembles the Latin most in its construction, and contains nearly three-fifths of Latin expressions. The Goths had less influence; these barbarous hordes adopted the language of the vanquished. Some vestiges are, however, still remaining, as is manifest from the words, "*flegel*" (DRESCHFLEGEL, flail) "*hosa*" (HOSE, breeches), "*ganza*" (GANS, goose), "*lato*" (LATTE, lath), "*barro*" (SPARRE, spar), &c.

The Languedoc language was still less modified by the Arabic, which is very conceivable from the short duration of the Saracen government. A great part of the botanical, pharmaceutical, and anatomical expressions, however, are borrowed from this language; and even the usual form of asseveration, "*VERMORA*," is to all appearance derived from the Arabic.

But the influence of the French must naturally preponderate over all others, as from this language the whole mass of modern mechanic and moral ideas are transferred into that of Languedoc. In fact, this has gradually amalgamated itself with the former to that degree, that the ancient language of the Troubadours is not to be distinguished without difficulty. Besides, the literature of this province was confined simply to some prayer-books and collections of hymns.



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 LETTER XXX.
 

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COUNTRY OF MONTPELLIER.—GEOGNOSTIC OBSERVATIONS.—MINERALOGICAL CURIOSITIES.—MASSIVE QUICKSILVER.—BOTANICAL REMARKS.—ENTOMOLOGICAL CURIOSITIES.—WALL-SPIDER.—AGRICULTURE.

*Montpellier, March, 1804.*

**T**HIS country is no less abundant in natural curiosities than Nîmes. I have therefore taken particular pains to collect as much information as possible on those points which have a peculiar interest for you. There are evident traces in all parts, of the whole basin, as far as the foot of the surrounding chain of mountains, having been formerly covered with sea; and in excavating, we soon meet with muscle sand and muscle beds. One of the greatest muscle beds is to be seen at Fort Chaude, about a league from Montpellier: it is many thousand fathoms long, and appears to consist of mere ostracites.

A second geognostic observation relates to the volcanic productions which are to be met with in the country of Montpellier, particularly at Montferrier, a league from the town. Here the whole of the hill, about eighty toises high, is covered with lava of different forms and sizes, also partly of mixed stuff. It is likewise evident, that the conic hill, standing perfectly free, was formerly a volcano; and it is with justice concluded, that this, as well as the whole neighbouring chain, owes its origin to a grand convulsion.

A third observation, which is not so much geognostic as oryctognostic, relates to the hill down the side of which Montpellier runs. It consists of intermixed layers of clay, and contains a course of massive quicksilver, which is generally reckoned among mineralogical rarities. It lies inclosed in mere small veins of clay and kalk, which ramify into an infinity of fine branches; whence, however, whole quantities may be loosened without a fracture. On pressing or breaking these little tubes, the quicksilver runs into globules, and is not inferior either in glitter or purity to that which is artificially revived.

The next and no less interesting subject, is botany. Northern and southern European and exotic plants thrive very well in this climate, so famous for its extremes.

The entomology of Montpellier possesses one curiosity, of which I will give you a sketch. It is a spider, of a lighter co-

lour and less hairy than the *arana nidulans Fabricitius*. It commonly sits on the floor of its cavern, and watches the approach of every insect to the ceiling of its narrow dwelling. The vibration of the fibres announcing the approach of an unsuspecting victim, it darts from its lurking hole, seizes its prey, and returns to the place of retreat.

The ceiling is so excellently adapted to the purpose of concealment, that such a spider's nest cannot be discovered without considerable trouble. If any one attempts to lift it up with a needle, the spider holds it fast with its fore feet as long as possible, and when compelled to yield to superior strength, suffers itself to be drawn out with the nest, but slips immediately into the hole again, and shuts the covering. Sauvages, who first discovered this insect, gave it the name of the wall-spider.

In regard to the soil of the country about Montpellier, I observe that its treatment, &c. is similar to that practised at Nismes; but it appears upon the whole to be less productive. Meadows and corn fields are seldom to be met with; but olive, vine, and mulberry plantations are the more frequent. In fact, the general face of the country round Montpellier, particularly in the summer, is that of a parched, dreary, shadeless surface.

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## LETTER XXXI.

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EXCURSIONS INTO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF MONTPELLIER.—MAGUELLONE.—HISTORY AND PARTICULARS.—CETTE.—SITUATION AND TRADE.—THE CEVENNES.—GENERAL SKETCH OF THESE MOUNTAINS.—PARTICULARS AND REMARKS.

Montpellier, March, 1804.

THIS being my last letter from Montpellier, I do not wish to leave these parts without saying a word, by way of recommendation to future travellers wishing to make excursions.

You remember very probably the old trading place Maguellone, which was built on an island about a league and a half from here. You have perhaps once read, that this Maguellone was destroyed in the eighth century, rebuilt in the eleventh, and voluntarily deserted by its inhabitants in the beginning of the sixteenth. You also doubtless know that to these two catastrophes, the neighbouring Montpellier is indebted for its origin and succeeding prosperity. This Maguellone is to be the object of our first ramble.

Through bogs and sloughs, sinking deeper and deeper on our way down the coast, we at length reach the miserable fishing hamlet of Villeneuve, which was formerly the suburbs of Montpellier.



We then perceive that the island on which Maguellone stood, is formed by the etang de Palavas and the sea: we still discover here and there ruins of the stony bridges, which went over the etang de Villeneuve to Maguellone, and perceive that the etang being now completely a marsh, both the island and the sea can be attained only by a small canal.

In whatever season these parts are visited, we never meet with any thing but stinking pools, and always inhale an air pregnant with fatal feverish particles. This was the reason why Maguellone was voluntarily forsaken in the beginning of the sixteenth century, and why the still remaining part of the city was completely pulled down in the year 1633.

As we step on shore, an old half-weather-beaten church, of a mixed European and Oriental architecture, is all that designates the spot of Maguellone: solitary and dreary it stands there, with its over-grown walls, a monument of the past.—But let us leave this gloomy island, to make a far more cheerful excursion to Cette.

Cette being only four leagues distant from Montpellier, there are daily conveyances thither. The road is tolerably interesting as we pass Frontignan, which, though poor, abounds in vineyards. Cette itself is a little place, having at the most eight thousand inhabitants; but it is remarkable for its particular situation, and considerable trade in former times. The town is divided into two parts by a canal, but both are connected by a bridge, which forms, at the same time, the separation betwixt the small and large harbour, that divides the narrow and broad part of the canal flowing into the sea. At the mouth of the latter, a mole of sixty or seventy toises in length is raised, on which stands a fort and beacon.

Cette is to be regarded as the proper port of Montpellier; it contains, however, many houses that have extensive concerns, at least as far as relates to the articles of wine and brandy, to the north. In good years formerly, two or three hundred large ladings of wine and brandy were sent from here. It is worthy of notice, that all casks are made of chesnut, there being whole woods of such trees on the Cevennes.—In regard to society in Cette, I have nothing to say in its favour; nor does it afford much matter for moral and picturesque delineations.

But so much the greater will be our recompence in a journey to the Cevennes according to our proposed plan. I have indeed been obliged to deny myself this pleasure, as the summer is the only season suitable for such an excursion. In order, however, to give you a general idea of the Cevennes, I will draw my sketch from Gensanne and Chaptal, and refer you for the picturesque details to Fisch, who will satisfy you the most in this particular.

A considerable chain of mountains runs along from east to west through the south of France, connecting the Alps with the Pyrenees; its highest point lying in Languedoc, in the districts of Alais and Rlezes. This chain bears the name of the Cevennes, and properly consists of ranges of mountains piled, as it were, like terraces one above another.

The first of these ranges forms the Garrigues, consisting of unfruitful chalky rocks, on which, a little fern, some straggling dwarf-bushes, &c. excepted, not a single trace of vegetation is to be found. This part of the Cevennes appears therefore but little populated, scarcely reckoning three or four villages over the wide extent. Wherever the industrious countryman could find a nook of fertile land amidst the rocks, there he has planted a vineyard, the produce of which is of the superior kind; and wherever a spear of grass is seen shooting up, there he lets his flock graze, which constitute his principal sustenance.

As we ascend, we reach the second division of the Cevennes, consisting of slate-rock. These mountains are much more fertile than the Garrigues. The narrow vales exhibit the most beautiful picture of vegetation. Meadows and fields, little woods of chesnut and mulberry trees, with every other sort of fruit, afford a charming variety to the eye. The population is also considerable, occupying a number of villages and some respectable towns. These mountains yield the chesnut wood for the casks of Montpellier and Cette, and supply very excellent cheese, which is afterwards sent to the ice-caves of Roquefort for ripening, and from thence conveyed through all France. The chief sustenance of the inhabitants, however, is drawn from cultivating and manufacturing silk. In this region also lies the beautiful and cheerful town of Vigand, which, on account of its healthy air and salutary spring, may serve for a delightful summer abode.

Thus we had attained the pinnacle of this mountain, the highest stage in the whole chain, consisting, like all other original mountains, of slate and granite. Fisch says very justly of this lofty eminence—"I found, however, no where traces of that primitive form which nature has given to such original mountains in their crystallization. No perpendicular walls of rock towering from the deep vallies, and none of those monstrous pyramids, at whose foot the boldest imagination is lost in amazement. Every thing here is shaped and blunted: all declivities are gentle, all precipices filled up; in a word, the first forms of the raw materials are completely obliterated. This part of the Cevennes is less populous than the former; yet the southern declivities of the mountains are fitted for pasturage, and the lower vales for the culture of fruit. The mountains themselves contain mines of silver, lead, alum, earth, coals, and rotten-stone.



The highest summit of the Cevennes, is the Esperou: you enjoy here a prospect which the Swiss Fisch prefers to his beloved country. "Round about," says he, "we saw the mountains and vallies of the Cevennes, at first view a cheerless rude assemblage, until we embrace the chief points from which the chains of mountains expand, and in which the vallies terminate. Towards the south, the eye traverses the Cevennes, and the Garrigues, and passing the fruitful plains of lower Languedoc, covered with towns and villages, rests by the help of the telescope, on the spiry points of Montpellier. Over the flat country we espied the *etangs* along the sea coast, a long chain of lakes: then the dams of sand which separate them from the sea, like a black line running many miles from east to west; and finally beyond these the glittering surface of the Mediterranean, which, by its undulating glimmer, seemed to amalgamate with the arch-of heaven, where our view was bounded by the horizon. The small island of Cette, with the sea-port St. Lewis at its foot, and the exhausted volcano St. Martin of Agde, distinguished themselves very evidently on the sand-bank. The east side commands the wide plain over the Cevennes, which is intersected by three arms of the Rhone rushing by three different courses into the sea: then the mountains of Provence amidst which the lofty Ventoux raises its proud head: finally beyond these, though indistinctly, the light blue Alps of Piedmont. On the west side, the mountains of Lodeve and Rovergue, and beyond them the Pyrenees are imperfectly descried through the veil of clouds. Towards the north, the lofty Lirou and the mountains in Gevaudan and Auvergne, at length terminate the prospect.

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## LETTER XXXII.

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DEPARTURE FROM MONTPELLIER. — NISMES. — VILLENEUVE. — THE MISTRAL. — THE RHONE. — EVENING. — CHANGE OF WEATHER. — FRENCH OFFICER. — ARRIVAL AT AVIGNON.

*Avignon, March, 1804.*

THE superscription of my letter announces to you my change of abode. I went from Montpellier to Nismes, and arrived the following afternoon at Villeneuve, which lies opposite to Avignon, on the right banks of the Rhone.

The mistral having blown vehemently for many hours, the watermen pronounced it impossible to pass over that day. Well acquainted with the tricks of this set of men, we resolved to convince ourselves by ocular demonstration, and accordingly that instant proceeded towards the Rhone. But this time the water-

men had actually spoken the truth, or at least we all felt within ourselves the impracticability of the scheme. Like a tumultuous ocean, boiling and foaming, the powerful Rhodanus rolled between the islands and cliffs, whilst the storm seemed every instant to redouble its fury, and all nature to be in one incessant ferment. As silent spectators, we surveyed in calm admiration the sublime spectacle, and towards the close of evening returned to our little inn.

We found, however, every part completely occupied by travellers, and the fire-place encircled by a double row. The mistral and the Rhone, Avignon and the watermen, the flaring fire, and the horrible smoke which the storm drove down, formed at first the principal topic. But we were scarcely seated at table, and had partaken of the first dish of Rhone fish, with the exchange of the first half dozen bottles for the second, than the old French vivacity revived, and every thing was forgotten in mirth and joviality.

In the mean time the mistral stormed the whole night with as much vehemence as if there had been an actual hurricane. But at break of day it began to subside; the sun rose from behind the clouds; every thing announced a speedy change of weather. Towards ten the wind was almost entirely still, and yet the watermen still persisted in the impossibility of a passage over.

Thus matters stood, when about noon a detachment of conscripts advanced, which were ordered to Marseilles. No sooner did the officer hear about the pretended impossibility, than he hastened to the mayor, shewed him his pressing orders, and made him, with the whole commune, responsible for all delays; the watermen were immediately convened, and after long consultations, and much disputation, they decided the possibility.

The officer brought us this information at dinner-time, giving the watermen the title they deserved, and offering us with much complaisance, places in his boat. I now learned that he was a Genevese, a M. de T—, and had formerly been in the Sardinian service. He still retained some knowledge of the German language, and I was happy to meet with a German who seemed in some measure to interest himself for Geneva and its delightful environs.

At length the watermen were ready, the conscripts were called over, and, on account of the frequent desertions, carefully embarked. Without farther ceremony, I then followed the officer with my fellow travellers. The watermen, indeed, protested with much clamour and abuse against our embarkation, but were soon reduced to silence by some menaces on his part, and a few fifteen sous-pieces on mine.

Thus we reached the island, marched as well as we could over



the swampy ground, entered a second conveyance, and at length happily reached the quay of Avignon. Here I took up my lodgings at the *hotel au palais national*, and from thence you may expect my communications on the town and its departments.

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### LETTER XXXIII.

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DEPARTMENT OF VAUCLUSE.—GENERAL REMARKS.—  
TOPOGRAPHICAL AND PHYSICAL OBSERVATIONS.—  
BOUNDARIES.—MOUNTAINS.—RIVERS.—SOIL.—CLIMATE, &c.

*Avignon, March, 1804.*

**AVIGNON** lies, as is well known according to the new geographical division of France, in the department of Vaucluse, so called on account of its famous spring. Before I speak of the town, I shall make some general remarks on the department itself.

The department of Vaucluse, in the south-eastern part of the republic, between  $43^{\circ} 42'$  and  $44^{\circ} 24'$  N. lat. and between  $2^{\circ} 23'$  and  $3^{\circ} 20'$  East long. of Paris, consists almost entirely of the former Comtat, as it was called; to which are added the ancient principality of Orange, and some smaller districts of the former Provence.

Its natural boundaries to the north and east, are lofty mountains, particularly Mount Ventoux (961 toises in height): to the south, the Durance, and to the west the Rhone; so that it is inclosed in the obtuse angle formed between those mountains and the conflux of these two rivers.

For its political boundaries it has to the north the department of the Drome: to the east, the department of the lower Alps: to the south the department of the Rhone sources, and to the west the department of the Gard. The first two departments only come in immediate contact with it: the two others being separated by the streams above-mentioned.

The topographical form of the department is almost oval: the large diameter from N. E. to S. E. measuring 21 leagues, and the small diameter 10: the whole circumference is estimated at 136 square leagues, reckoning a league at 2566 toises.

According to the remarks above-mentioned, the department may be divided into the level and the mountainous; the level is in reality nothing but the continuation of the Rhone-valley to Avignon, and that of the Durance valley from Avignon as far as Robion. This plain is, at the commencement along the Rhone, extremely confined, but gradually extends from Orange; it then takes a circular direction from west to east, towards Sarrians, Monteux, Pernes, &c. and finally runs southward, in the upper

part of Cavaillon, towards the Durance. Some inconsiderable eminences are occasionally to be met with in its course.

The mountainous part is distinguished by a pretty high chain in the north, entering from the Drome department, and closing in the upper part of Valreas to the *Montagne de la Lance*. From Valreas another chain extends southward to the Ouveze, at Vaqueures. Here it changes its direction, and running in a circular form eastward of the *Mont Betoux*, then turning again southward, it is finally lost in the mountains du Liberon, which first go westward along the Durance, and then pass over into the department of the Lower Alps.

Besides the rivers Durance to the south, and Rhone to the west, we must not forget the Sorgue with its many arms, besides a number of rivulets, or, more properly, mountain-brooks, the Lez, Ouveze, Nesque, &c. which are dry in the summer, but very dangerous in sudden inundations.

We observe, that all these streams follow the direction of those two grand rivers, viz. they flow partly as the Durance, from east to west, partly as the Rhone, from north to south, according as they fall into the one or the other, the Rhone receiving the greater part. Of all these rivers, the Durance alone aids agriculture; yet the canals carried off from it, with all their collateral divisions, extend at the utmost three leagues into the country.

In regard to the soil, we meet in various districts with clay, sand, gravel, earth, and chalk land. The greater part of the department of Vaucluse consists of kalk-land, or rather limestone, which constitutes high mountains. If the mountains be low, and their declination trifling, petrefactions are sometimes found in them; but in a strong declination not the slightest traces of these exist. In like manner, the muscle-stone appears in the higher mountains only on the surface; as, on the other hand, the lower divisions are almost entirely composed of marine productions.

These mountains do not abound in minerals. We find only blood-stone, iron-stone, bolus, ochre, and lead-ore, but without layers, and often, very singularly dispersed; while the potter's clay is found very plentiful, and indeed of all sorts, from the finest china earth to the coarsest slate.

As to the climate, it will easily be supposed, that it is not less various than the soil. The plain being the most inhabited division of the whole department, we have confined ourselves to it in the following notices on this point.

The temperature is, in general, extremely changeable. It is not unfrequent to see within a short space, the differences of 8, 10 to 12 degrees, particularly downwards. The heat in summer



rises to 28 degrees Reaum.; in winter, the cold to 9 degrees. In regard to the latter, it is remarkable that it has risen to this extraordinary height, since the year 1789; as before it seldom reached the fifth degree. The moderate height of the barometer is 28 inches 2 lines; the greatest variation hitherto observed was one inch and ten lines.

A very great influence on the modification of the weather here, is to be ascribed to the winds; to which the department is considerably exposed. Among these we mention first, the extremely cold and piercing north west (*mistraou*,) which prevails at least two thirds of the year, and to a certain degree in every season. It roars with such vehemence down the Rhone valley, that it often runs 160 to 170 metres in a minute, and almost four migriamètres (leagues) in an hour. Its duration is various: sometimes it lasts four, seven, and even nine days; and at other times only four and twenty hours.

It is the same with the north wind as with the north west wind, which is frequently confounded with the *mistraou* under the name of *bise acute*.

The department suffers much less from the north east, since on account of the lofty chain of Alps, it can only be felt as N. N. E. Here it is called *Barrousiere*, because it appears to rush down from the mountains by the village Barroux: it is not so cold as the former, but it sometimes blows with equal fury, and is distinguished by its violent whirling. Unpleasant, however, as the abovementioned winds may be, they notwithstanding cool the atmosphere in the parching heat of summer. Only when they all three begin to combat with each other, the most dreadful hurricanes are the consequence.

The south-east, the south, and the south-west winds, here called *marins*, are also very vehement, although with very different gradations. They usually bring rain, which, particularly in the winter, resembles a water-spout. But very frequently they turn on a sudden round to west-south-west, or completely to west, and hence arises the *marin blanc* or *raou*, and *traverson*, which disperse the clouds with great rapidity, unattended by rain. I shall here close my topographical and physical remarks on the department de Vaucluse, reserving my agricultural and other observations to another letter.

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 LETTER XXXIV.
 

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AGRICULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL REMARKS ON THE  
DEPARTMENT. — HUSBANDRY. — SOIL. — METHODS. —  
PRODUCTS. — BOTANICAL, ZOOLOGICAL, ORNITHOLOGICAL,  
ENTOMOLOGICAL, ICHTHYOLOGICAL, AND MINERALOGICAL  
NOTICES, &c.

*Avignon, March, 1804.*

AGREEABLY to my promise I will now occupy your time, and, I hope not totally without interest, on the various scientific observations which the Vaucluse department affords. In regard to its agriculture, I must remark, that the soil is in general extremely sterile, which may be ascribed partly to the climate, and partly to its relative situation.

The principal characteristic of the climate here, is perpetual drought. In spring it seldom rains, or at least in such a small quantity as to make no impression on the soil. During the summer season, two, three, or four months pass without a drop of rain falling: in autumn, though there is no want of showers, the water flows over the hard ground as over a floor; and what is still worse, the floods often leave a quantity of pebbles behind. In winter the earth always freezes some inches deep, without being covered with snow, which is so salutary. All that the ground therefore receives in moisture is confined to the few gentle showers in autumn and spring, and to the scanty dews which usually fall in the summer nights.

The topographical causes of the dry soil have their origin in the following circumstance. The department is indeed watered by two great, and several smaller rivers; but agriculture derives very little benefit from them. The Rhone passing almost in a straight line to the Mediterranean, scarcely moistens the boundaries of the western part, and serves but little or not at all the purpose of irrigation. From the Durance which crosses the southern part of the department, two or three canals indeed, known under the names of *Canal de Cavaillon*, *de Crillon*, and *la Durancole*, are carried into the country, but not farther than three leagues. The smaller rivers, except the Sorgue, are during the greater part of the year perfectly dried up, and consequently contribute but little to fertilization.

But where then are the delightfully cultivated and beautifully watered countries, so much celebrated by the rapturous descrip-



tions of travellers? We find them in the plain between Cavaillon and Avignon, a charming vale of the most luxuriant vegetation and the most manifold fertility. The other quarters in the department that are higher situated, and not irrigated, produce in particular some almonds and saffron; but the husbandry is beyond comparison more arduous, and the produce depends on the early and late rains. Towards the mountains of the Garrigues, we find the land mostly overgrown with aromatic herbs.

The methods of tilling the land have in general undergone some improvements, although much remains in particular cases to be altered.

The principal articles of growth here are rye, barley, wheat, oats, oil, wine, pasturage, vegetables, madder, saffron, hemp, and flax. Among these products, wheat and saffron are the most precarious, and wine the worst, from a defective mode of treatment; madder the most prolific and general: *cyperus esculentus*, which thrives very well on the banks of the Rhone and the Durance, is the newest; hemp, flax, and oil the most inconsiderable. The breeding of cattle is very much neglected; that of the silkworms appears gradually to decline; and the cultivation of fruit is extremely limited.

If we proceed to the natural history of this department, botany is the first thing that demands our attention from the very great abundance and extraordinary variety of its objects. In Vaucluse, as in the whole south of France, on account of the peculiar climate, we meet with northern and southern plants near each other. It is therefore very easily explained why the Flora here departs but little from those already referred to.

In zoological respects, the observer is not gratified with any thing remarkable: I therefore merely notice that there are many hares and rabbits on the mountains. The ornithology of this place deserves attention, particularly on account of the many birds of passage, amongst which may be reckoned the bustard. The science of entomology is amplified by the addition of the finest, and, in part, exotic coleopteres. In ichthyological respects, the trout and eels from the Sorgue, the sturgeons and shads from the Rhone, are entitled to particular notice. In mineralogy we find, besides several pits of kalk, clay, and plaister, very fine variegated sorts of *jasper*, *marble*, *coal*, *lead mines*, and a number of mineral springs at Vaqueyres &c. I shall in my next give you particulars relative to the city of Avignon.

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 LETTER XXXV.
 

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AVIGNON.—SITUATION.—EXTENT.—CURIOSITIES.—CLIMATE.—METEOROLOGICAL REMARKS.—DOMESTIC ECONOMY.—PROVISIONS, &c.—THEATRE.—COFFEE-HOUSES, &c.—LIBRARY.—MUSEUM, &c.—EXCURSIONS.

*Avignon, March, 1804.*

**A**VIGNON in  $43^{\circ} 87' 25''$  north lat. and  $2^{\circ} 28' 33''$  east long. of Paris, with 22,000 inhabitants at the utmost, runs along the left bank of the Rhone on a declining plain, and forms on the whole a regular oval. When we reckon a third of the extent for churches and cloisters, for gardens, meadows, canals, burying grounds, &c. the two remaining thirds present nothing but a labyrinth of narrow angular streets, which mostly contain very mean houses. The old papal castle of Avignon with its appurtenances, may be considered the greatest topographical curiosity. This is a high chalky rock at the foot of which the town elevates itself, and from its point we may command a very extensive view of the Rhone valley.

The climate here is distinguished by its extraordinary vicissitudes. Parching summers, where the thermometer rises to  $23^{\circ}$  Reaum. are succeeded by bitter cold winters, when it sometimes falls  $12^{\circ}$  below the freezing point. But on the other hand, the transitions also from hot to cold, and vice versa, are so excessively rapid and irregular, that we often perceive differences of  $10$ - $12^{\circ}$  in a few hours. The middle height of the barometer is 28 inches 1 line; the highest variation with north and south winds is usually 1 inch and 9 lines.

The yearly quantity of rain is estimated, on an average, at 18-19 inches; yet the autumn and spring rains are liable to many irregularities. Mists are very rare, but hoar-frost and snow the more frequent. This has been particularly the case, according to careful observations, since the year 1789, as the climate in general appears to be continually growing colder. With regard to the winds, I may refer you to the sketch given above (letter xxxiii), and shall only add, that they are stormy in Avignon almost the whole year: and that the wind passes through the whole compass twenty or thirty times a week.

In domestic economy we are not to look for cheapness here, since the greater part of the provisions must be procured from



the neighbouring departments. Whoever stays at a good inn, requires at least eight livres daily for his board; I must also observe that the general beverage is spring-water, which is very bad, although the Rhone would afford an excellent supply.

For social purposes, both a public and private theatre are established at Avignon; there are, besides a number of miserable coffee-houses, some *bostringues*, or dancing-rooms, and above all a number of damsels with full bosoms and black eyes, who are actually very seducing.

Vaocluse is about four leagues distant from Avignon, and is famous for its picturesque situation, rock-springs, and mild temperature. Without wearying you with a fresh description of the Grotto of Petrarch, &c. I will merely tell you, that Vaocluse is a little village of about seventeen houses, with two good pepper-mills. I must add, that it is sheltered by a chain of high mountains from the mistral, and refreshed by the gushing Sorgue, so that it enjoys both in winter and summer, an extremely agreeable temperature. It appears to be a very healthy residence, as for fifteen or eighteen months there is often not a single sick person in the village.

A second excursion will conduct the traveller to Cavaillon, in the neighbourhood of Vaocluse, lying on the right bank of the Durance. Here he will conceive himself transported into the most beautiful garden, which is entitled to the appellation of the Eden of Provence. Finer vegetables, more lovely clusters of trees; richer vineyards and olive hills, are no where to be found. Artichokes and peaches are the most in request from Cavaillon; and the inhabitants are celebrated as the best gardeners in the Provence.

Not far from this place lies also *l'Isle*, in one of the most beautiful countries that can be imagined, round which two arms of the Sorgue gently rustle. In fact, the whole country between Cavaillon and Avignon reminds the observer, by its excellent system of irrigation, its charming plantations of trees, its vegetation, as luxurious as it is manifold, of the most captivating scenery in Valencia.

The next excursion is to Carpentras, where the remains of an old triumphal arch, the modern aqueduct, and the splendid hospital (the last two of which are greatly out of repair), and the public library, are worthy of observation. The latter contains a great number of old books from France, Italy, and Germany. The MSS. of the famous Peyresc are also preserved here. Among the other MSS. the two folio volumes of the genuine Troubadour poems deserve peculiar notice. Besides, the library possesses a collection of Roman medals, six thousand in number, of which many pieces will be found very valuable, and a series of original

drawings no less worthy of attention, which are ascribed to many masters of the best schools.

An excursion to Beaumes and Malaucènes will introduce you to two small but healthy towns very agreeably situated, and famous for their peculiar temperature. Beaumes is completely sheltered from the mistral, and therefore extremely mild; Malaucènes, on the contrary, is by means of its lofty northern position, exposed to the *bise*, and therefore cool even in the summer. Whoever inhabited Beaumes in the winter and Malaucènes in the summer, would enjoy a constant spring temperature. This would be the more practicable, both towns lying at the utmost only two leagues and a half distant from each other.

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### LETTER XXXVI.

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ECONOMY OF AVIGNON.—MANUFACTURES.—IMPORTS AND EXPORTS.—CHARACTER OF THE INHABITANTS.—CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.—LITERARY INSTITUTIONS.—CONCLUSION.

*Avignon, March, 1804.*

YOU of course expect me not to leave Avignon without giving you some farther particulars of its internal arrangements. I shall satisfy your wishes on this head as far as lies in my power, beginning with that branch of human industry which is engaged in the silk manufactures. In this concern we find fifteen hundred quills employed, where particularly taffety, *façon de Florence* and *demi-Florence* are manufactured, which keep sixty or seventy silk-mills at work. There are about twenty dyers, two cotton-manufactories, several brandy distilleries and beer-breweries; different manufactories of *grappe*, verdigrease, and aquafortis; a copper foundry, and a flatting mill. Most of them have sprung up since the revolution: while on the other hand, the government has wisely suppressed the many pirating printers and booksellers formerly tolerated, and even favoured under the papal dominion. The greater part of these manufactories have been established on the banks of three canals carried from the Sorgue and Durance through the town.

With regard to the mercantile relations of Avignon, the exports consist of raw hides, fine cloths, oil, soap, linen, wheat, horned cattle and sheep, together with provisions of all kinds; its exports are the produce of the department and the different manufactures of the town, as madder, truffles, honey, wax, yellow wood, saffron, clover-seed, &c. also taffety, cotton, copper-plates, verdigrease, aqua-fortis, lavender, &c. in which the balance is in favour of Avignon.



You see from this sketch that the inhabitants of Avignon, or the *Avignoses* as they are called, are by no means wanting in activity, although otherwise an extremely licentious, luxurious, and extravagant people. They have at the same time always a certain Italian air about them, which the revolution has not been able to obliterate: in a word, they appear to be no native Frenchmen, but only adopted Italians.

I shall conclude this letter with some remarks on the public charitable institutions of Avignon. I must place in the first rank the finely built General Hospital, which appears to have good accommodations for two hundred and fifty sick. I mention to you also the poor and orphan-house, which is now to have a better *organization*, and an establishment for lunatics, which has many good regulations, particularly for those who are only deranged; but the raving maniacs are here very ill provided for.

The *Benevolent Society* deserve also honourable mention, the object of which is to afford relief to the poor and sick; it has also introduced the Rumford soup-machines. With this society is connected a *Bureau de Charité*, consisting of married women alone, who direct their benefactions particularly to the relief of pregnant persons, helpless lying-in women, and infant orphans.

Avignon possesses a Lyceum, which is to be organized, with several privileged boarding-schools, under the inspection of the prefect. It has a learned society, called *Athenée de Vaucluse*, which reckons amongst its honorary members, very celebrated names; for example, *Buonaparte*, *Boufflers*, *Chardon de la Rochette*, *Fortanes*, *Fourcroy*, *Jenner*, *Lalande*, *Pastoret*, *Pougens*, *Segur*, *Thulis*, *Volney*, &c. In the list of honorary members of the medical society, we find the names of *Gmelin*, *Strohmeyer*, *Weber*, *Wiedemann*, &c. &c. There is also finally, a Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture and Trade, which makes great efforts. From all the preceding it is manifest, that Avignon has, in every respect, been a gainer by the revolution.

I am going by Lyons to Geneva, and flatter myself with completing my journey in fourteen days.

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## APPENDIX.

### *Observation.*

The following description of the antiquities at Nismes is taken from Vincens and Menard, the former of whom acted as guide to the year 1758, and the latter to 1803.

*The Amphitheatre*—forms a perfect oval. Its great diameter from east to west, is 67 toises 3 feet; the small one, from north to south, 52 toises 5 feet; yet so, that with both, the wall of

the façade is included in the calculation. The whole external circumference of the building is 190 toises ; the height from the floor to the attic amounts to 10 toises 5 feet 11 inches. The building consists of a ground floor, an upper story, and the attic, which serves as a covering.

The ground floor is composed of sixty arcades equally remote from each other, which were so many entrances into the interior of the amphitheatre. These arcades are very high, and decorated with a pilaster, which is almost two feet in profile, and nearly the same in thickness. Two feet from the architrave these pilasters are cut off, and inserted two inches.

The upper story contains the same number of arcades. These arcades are provided with a parapet of brick-work, and decorated with Tuscan pillars : at least it appears to be this order, and not of the Doric. The upper part of these arcades, both in the ground floor and in this story, is always four feet distant from the architrave.

The attic is, in fact, a second story, but without arcades or pillars. It affords therefore a sort of open terraces, on which a person may even now walk round almost the whole amphitheatre, and serves as a cover : for the lower part closes the whole in due architectural proportions. Along this division may be observed the freestone, with the holes in which, by means of large stakes, the velarium was stretched over the seats.

The outward wall has four main gates, which are all placed at equal distances, in opposite directions, always fifteen arcades from each other. As to the steps or seats of the amphitheatre, out of the two and thirty belonging to this building, only the seventeen uppermost are preserved, and even these are defective : the lowest rows from the pradium to the main story, are already totally in a complete ruinous state. By measurements of the seats still in preservation it has been found, that they consist of free-stone, from 8 to 10 feet long, and are from 18 to 24 inches high. The upper row is adjacent to the attic, and is only 3 feet 2 inches distant from the key-stones.

In regard to the solidity of this structure, it is worthy of remark, that the whole external wall throughout is four feet and a half in thickness, and composed of mere large pieces of free-stone, joined together by cramp-irons, without mortar. The smallest of these pieces of free-stone are 3 toises long, and one toise high ; but some have twice that length and breadth.

On viewing the decorations of some arcades, the eye is caught with the half-bodies of two steers, projecting on the gate towards the north, the usual emblem of the Roman colonies. On one of the next pilasters is the figure of the Roman she-wolf, with the



two sucking children, worked half in relievo ; which was an emblem of the privileges of Roman citizens.

On the breastwork of the upper arcade are placed two wrestlers, whose figures are very bold and striking. Many of the neighbouring pilasters present a number of priapi, and the figures of birds, bells, wings, &c. The building of the amphitheatre of Nismes took place between the years 138 and 161, in the reign of the emperor Antoninus Pius ; but farther particulars respecting it are not known.

*La Maison Carrée.*—This charming temple, so called from its quadrangular form, is 12 toises long, including the vestibule, and adorned on the outside with Corinthian pillars, the shafts of which are excellently wrought. In the front of the vestibule these pillars form a portico, but along the wall of the building they are connected with it to the half of their diameter. The architrave, frieze, and cornice of the whole distinguish themselves by their excellent sculpture.

The temple itself being at least four feet and a half above the foundation, we ascend the vestibulum by twelve steps. Now we stand before a square door 2 toises 4 feet in height, and 1 toise 4 feet in breadth ; and then stepping up into the interior, we find that this is exactly two-thirds the length of the whole, being 8 toises ; also 6 toises in breadth, and as many in height. From some vestiges discovered in repairing it, this temple is supposed to have received its light through the roof ; but it is ridiculous to suppose with some travellers, that the little *modern windows* had been introduced there by the Roman architects.

The foundation of this temple has occasioned many investigations. Seguier, and after him Clerisseau, seemed to have found the most accurate solutions ; but it is affirmed that a very able engineer, M. Granget, of Nismes, who examined it afresh in the year 1802, differs from them very widely. He has communicated the result of his enquiries to the *Academie du Gard*, in a memoir which will probably be printed as soon as the requisite drawings are engraven for it. In general it appears, according to M. Granget's exact researches, that this foundation was a Corinthian basis, and that the present earth now surrounding the building has been raised six feet higher.

The erection and destination of this temple was long a matter of speculation. Some regarded it as a capitol ; others as a prætorium ; and a third party considered it as a basilica. Finally, the learned Seguier hit on the idea of studying the cavities which were observed over the front, to be marks of an old metal inscription formerly affixed to it. After many toilsome trials, investigations, comparisons, &c. he at length found that the inscription ran as follows :

C. CÆSARI AUGUSTI. F. COS. L. CÆSARI AUGUSTI.  
F. COS. DESIGNATO. PRINCIPIBUS JUVENTUTIS.

Hence it appears, that this temple was dedicated to the two sons of Augustus, Caius and Lucius.

*The Temple of Diana.*—The ruins of this beautiful temple, which is also quadrangular, are falling every year to decay; in a short time there will be but very few traces of its architecture to be perceived.

*La Tour Magne*—having been already described, we merely add, that it is necessary to ascend by a high ladder, which, on account of the mouldering state of the stones, is attended with much danger.

On pulling down, in the year 1769, the ramparts that had been built in 1194, the remains of two Roman gates were found, one of which was almost in a perfect condition, although the threshold is nearly three toises under the present ground. The whole exhibits, besides the ruins of the two side turrets, a façade of ten toises three feet in length, and four toises three feet in height, to the destroyed cornice. At both ends is a pilaster of the Corinthian order, and in the middle are two others, by which the whole is divided into three parts the middle one being the broadest. The latter forms two high main passages separated from each other, the two lower ones appearing to have lead to the light-houses. The arches of the main passages are a toise in thickness. Over them we see the following inscription :

IMP. CÆSAR. DIVI. F. AUGUSTUS.  
COS. XI. TRIB. POTEST VIII.  
PORTAS MUROS. COL. DAT.

From this it appears that this gate was built under the emperor Augustus, and in the year 736 of the Roman æra, that is, about fifteen or sixteen years before the christian era.

A great number of Roman wells have been discovered at Nismes; they are commonly only 25 or 30 inches broad, yet there are some whose dimensions are far more considerable.

Of the numerous floors with mosaic worth, the following are remarkable : In the house of a M. Renouard is a great fragment of such a floor preserved, which is 3 toises 3 feet long, and 2 toises 2 feet broad. The ground is black, the interior consists of three squares in one another, encircled by a double border. The prevailing colours are white, red, and black. The exterior border represents a line of turrets and fortifications, which appear to rest alternately on the basis of a triangle and the head of a figure. The internal border consists of a row of porticos, which are, with its basis, about one foot eight inches high. The whole is distinguished for its beauty and perfection.

In 1767, an excellently wrought floor was found, on which



was seen, in a border, as light as it is tasteful, a Diana, in a lying position, Her hair was flying; in her hand she had a lance; at her feet, on one side, was a dog, on the other the trunk of a boar. The whole was composed of the finest and most manifold species of marble, green appearing to be the predominant colour. But unfortunately this charming picture fell during the revolution, into indifferent hands, and has been almost entirely shattered to pieces.

At a M. Laporte's we see a floor which as may be easily calculated has been six toises long and three toises two feet broad. The ground was yellow, with large black hexagons, in which all sorts of figures, as stars, concentric circles, ellipses, &c. are to be found. The border is very simple, consisting of merely black and yellow lines of various breadths.

A fourth very fine floor is to be seen at Messrs. Foussard, Astier, and Rigaud's, but unfortunately it forms a part of the warehouse and counting-house. From the drawings and materials, this fragment appears to be the costliest of its kind.

A very fine floor in the house of M. Maury is said to be in a complete state of preservation, and composed of white, red, and blue triangles.

*Statue of Hygeia.*—This statue is of white marble. The goddess is sitting, and has a horn of plenty in her hand: the lower part of the left arm is wanting. The style denotes the finest period of the arts.

*A Bass-Relief of Vespasian.*—A marble medaillon of about nine inches diameter which is very finely wrought and in very good condition.

A bass-relief on an altar, representing a priest holding in his right hand a sacrificing bowl, and standing on the point of making a libation. Underneath we read,

AUGUSTI  
LARIBUS  
CULTORES UR-E  
FONTIS.

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## TO THE READER.

I have endeavoured to paint Nismes and Montpellier in their true colours, and have always supported my assertions with evidence. I conceived this to be the more important, as so many patients have been already deluded. Should, however, any reader be displeased with me for destroying this charming delusion, I will only conduct him to Hieres, and we shall be reconciled.

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